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JOHN O'SULLIVAN ON MAUREEN DOWD

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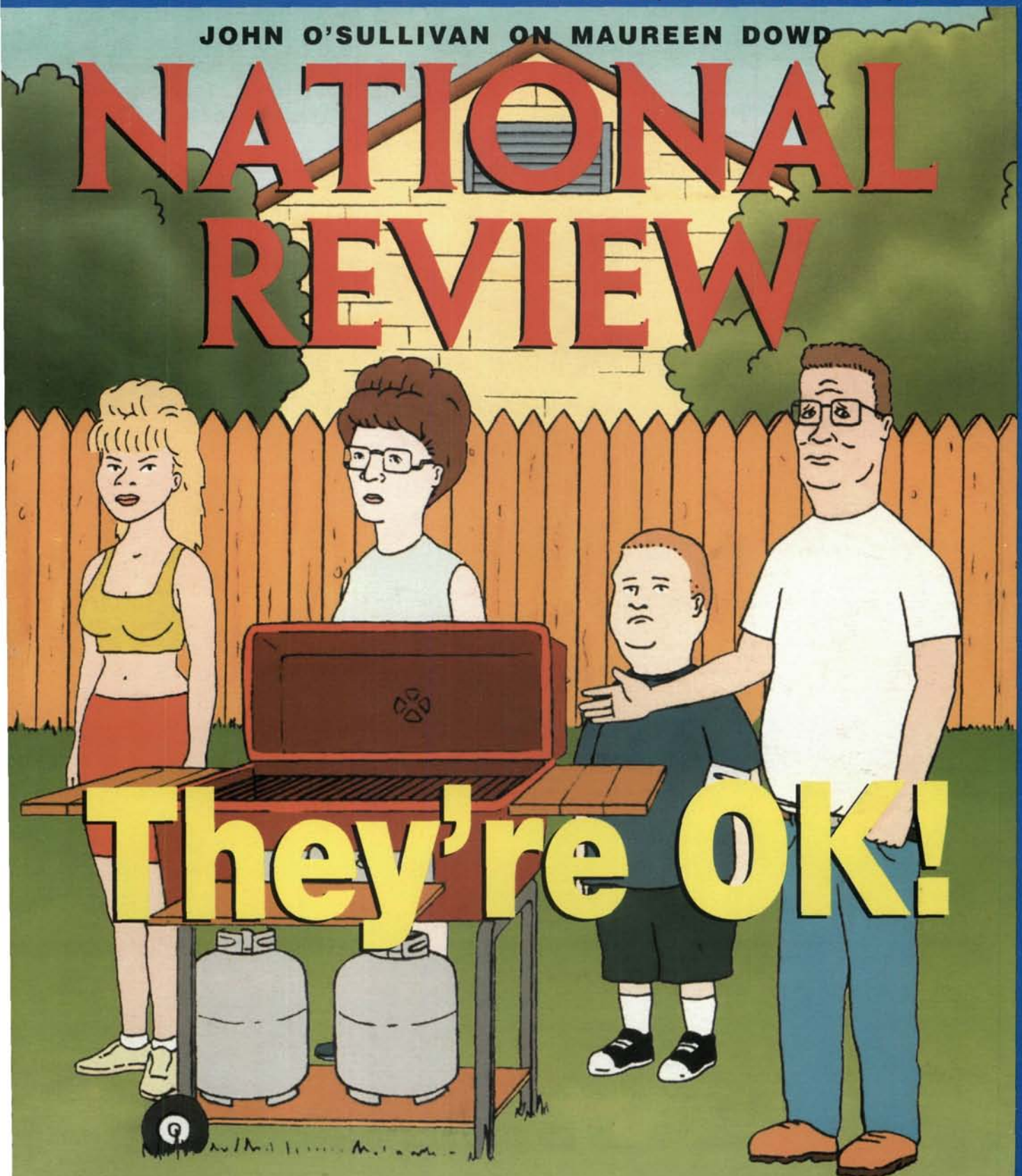

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■ LETTERS ■

COMPASSION WITH RESULTS

John O'Sullivan's piece on the so-called "Compassion Play" (Feb. 22) of the Bush brothers' campaigns in Texas and Florida was entirely correct in asserting that caring is not "policy." I would submit, however, that each of them won handily, in spite of national trends, by taking the stance that a candidate should be judged, as Republican leaders in Texas declared, on the "application of conservative principles to everyday, practical situations."

Each of them demonstrated, in the matter of abortion for example, that there are sensitive and responsible answers to this divisive issue, insisting that such decisions be made with full consideration of all available options, including adoption and foster-home placement of babies. George Bush set up private foundations to provide temporary housing, maternity care and delivery, job training, and low-cost adoptions, while Jeb Bush encouraged state promotion of private resources to achieve the same goals. As a result, some Florida cities reportedly saw increases in adoptions as high as 65 percent! Moreover, the compassion and the care came from existing resources, and not increased taxes.

The GOP should replicate the Bushes' winning playbooks in areas of education, urban renewal, and a host of other issues.

R. Graham Nash
Lake Forest, Calif.

A BETTER DEFENSE

Mark Helprin's fine article ("The War of the Lights," Feb. 22) highlights one aspect of the Strategic Defense Initiative that its proponents always seemed to forget—SDI was never intended to intercept all incoming missiles (which would be impossible). It was necessary only to intercept enough of them to "protect . . . our retaliatory capacity, making a first strike against us useless and unavailing."

SDI opponents ridiculed it as an unworkable scheme to build an impenetrable umbrella in space. Without adequate rebuttal, many people came to believe that was the intention, and their instinct told them, correctly, that it would never work.

Thomas Litchfield
Palo Alto, Calif.

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

I have been reading your magazine for many years. What prevents me from becoming a true believer is what I see as a compromise of your principles in defense of the American economic system. A fine illustration of this is Mr. Buckley's dismissiveness of his Church's social teaching with the lame excuse that it is narrowly focused on distribution and not production. There are many great things to celebrate about our prosperity. But it is legitimate to ask what we want our system to accomplish.

Instead of asking these important questions, NR continues to advertise its mission: It stands athwart history, yelling Stop! Why not Improve? Or Progress? Anything but Stop! This goes to the heart of the conservative failure to offer a vision for a better America. I do not want to make the perfect the enemy of the good—I am not talking about Utopia. There is something attainable other than whatever is at the end of the road conservatives would have us continue on. Certainly NR wants a society of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But liberty for what? And what is the nature of this happiness? These are questions anyone who appreciates the natural-law philosophy of the Founding Fathers would ask. They are questions with answers.

Christopher Pohl
Sydney, Ohio

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

Will someone please get John Simon ("Lies Are Unbeautiful," Feb. 22) a life? An imagination? A sense of humor? I'm one of those idiots who found *Life is Beautiful*, well, beautiful, and hilarious, and an astonishingly powerful thrashing of the grave evil and insidious civic pretense of the culture of death. Bravo for Benigni! May he reap Oscars galore, and may Simon come to understand what he should have known at first sight—it is far more than sentiment that makes *Life* beautiful.

Gerald Francis Kerr
Fort Scott, Kan.

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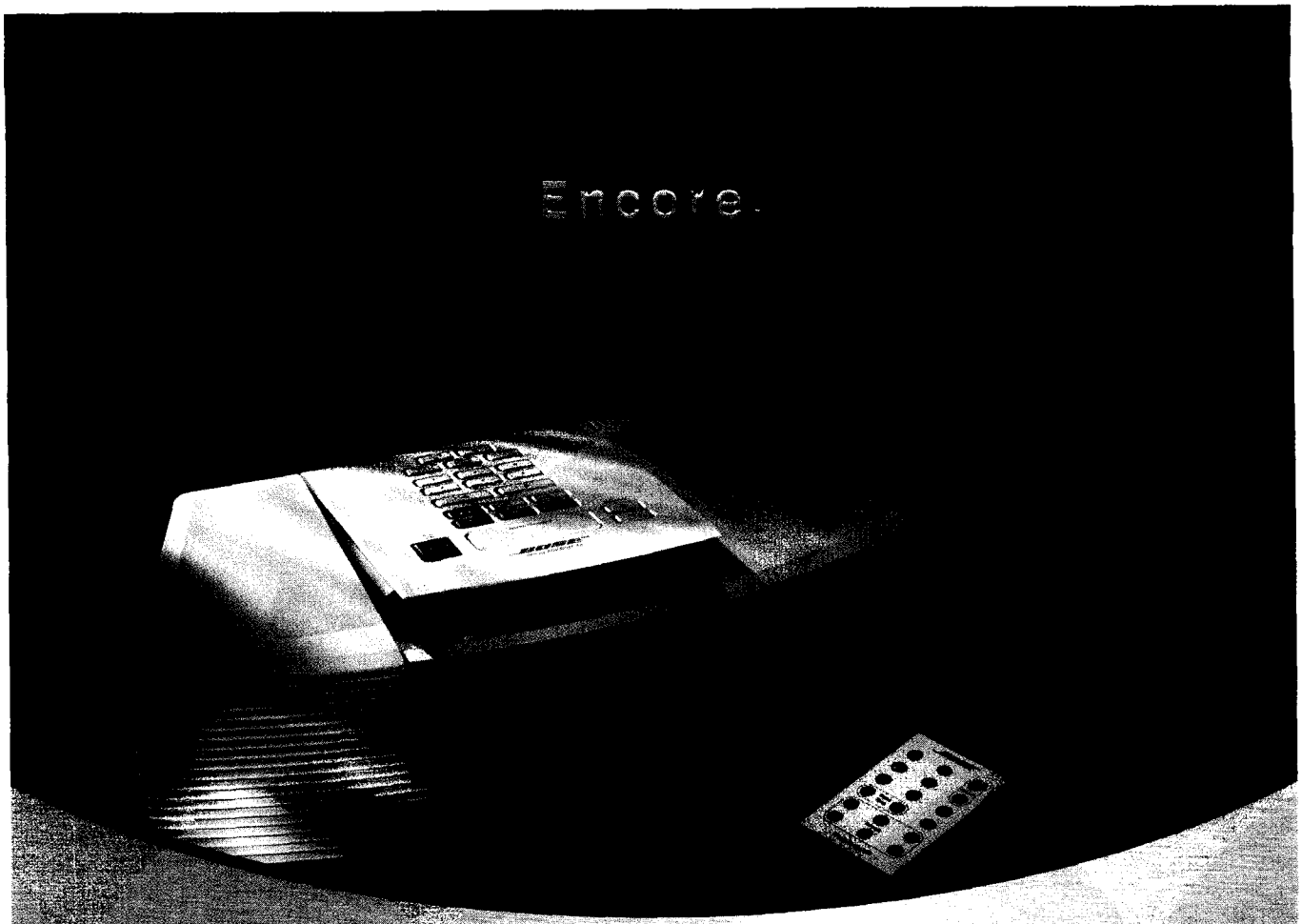

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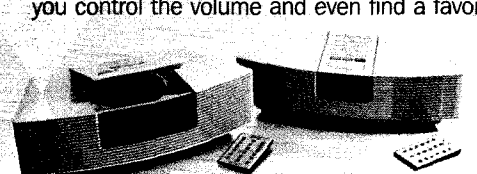

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■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ President **Clinton**, taking the long view: "Fifteen years from now, if the Congress wants to give more tax relief, let them do it." . . . Sen. **Bob Torricelli** (D., N.J.) in *Wall Street Journal*: "No one is rich enough in this country that the government should be taking 40 percent of anyone's income." . . . Director and screenwriter **Nora Ephron**: "It can be embarrassing for a woman to be in the same room as Bill Clinton." . . . *Time*'s **Margaret Carlson**: "The president is going to end up being compared to **Mike Tyson**, who's good at what he does but is not a good person and we all know it." . . . **Ken Starr**'s office hints National Archives may get **Lewinsky** love dress. Archivist **Steven Tilley** tells *New York Post*, "We're probably not going to put something like that on display right away. . . . Sometime, way down the road, there might be an exhibition." Promises dress "won't be cleaned." . . . Despite unpopularity of Starr, 57 percent in Pew Research Center poll say Congress should renew independent-counsel law. . . . As **Hillary Clinton** mulls Senate bid in New York, Congressional Black Caucus calls on attorney general **Janet Reno** to investigate potential GOP candidate **Rudy Giuliani**'s New York Police Department following shooting of unarmed man.

■ Courage isn't contagious: Rep. **John Kasich** (R., Ohio) visits AmeriCorps office in Iowa and says he would not vote again to eliminate Clinton make-work program. . . . "If **Mrs. Dole** is running, she's running for vice president," says GOP strategist. . . . University of Cincinnati poll: Among Ohio's registered voters, Bush and Dole lead **Gore** by big margins, but Gore far ahead of **Gary Bauer**, **Steve Forbes**, and Kasich. . . . California GOP refuses to invite Kasich to convention because state Republicans still fuming at his fundraising for Rep. **Gary Condit** (D., Calif.) two years ago. . . . Wisconsin governor **Tommy Thompson** burns bridges in radio interview. On Bush: "He hasn't really done much as governor in regards of doing anything new or innovative." On **Dan Quayle**: "He can't spell potato." On **Lamar Alexander**: "He's not electrifying." . . . Sen. **John McCain** (R., Ariz.) receives award from League of Latin-American Citizens for supporting "English Plus"—a shibboleth for bilingual education. Fellow honoree at ceremony is Gore. . . . Bauer campaign raises $500,000 in first direct-mail drop. . . . **Pat Buchanan** readies another presidential bid, but most former advisors are with other candidates or unavailable.

■ Retirement announcements by two Democrats, Sen. **Richard Bryan** (Nev.) and Sen. **Frank Lautenberg** (N.J.), bolster GOP Senate hopes for 2000, but rumors of Sen. **Connie Mack**'s (Fla.) departure dampen celebrations. . . . Republican fundraisers believe Hillary Clinton Senate candidacy would fuel massive campaign contributions to GOP, helping shore up vulnerable incumbents in Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. . . . AFL-

"Either it's Nirvana or he's blacked out from lack of oxygen again."

CIO approves $46 million spending plan to capture House and retain White House, but delays candidate endorsements until August to build support for this year's legislative agenda. One member union, International Association of Firefighters, has already endorsed Gore; another, Communications Workers of America, expected to follow in July. . . . To help Democrats with redistricting, Census Bureau announces it will conduct two censuses. Three months earlier, it promised one-number census to "improve accuracy and eliminate confusion and controversy."

■ *Out* magazine suggests gay-rights political strategy: "How about this approach: Do nothing. Why not simply extract ourselves from popular votes? After all, we fare much better outside the electoral arena. Look at the courts. . . . We mostly prevail." . . . California attorney general **Bill Lockyer** announces crackdown on prison violence, assigns task force to study how prisoners can be better protected from prison guards. California's Correctional Peace Officers Association supported Lockyer's opponent in last election, reports *Kaloogian Insider*.

■ University of Chicago's **Austan Goolsbee** says applying sales tax to Internet commerce would reduce online spending by more than 30 percent. . . . Delaware Association of Scholars survey: 69 percent of University of Delaware faculty members oppose racial preferences in student admissions. . . . American Legislative Exchange Council releases education report card on states, finds big-spending New Jersey ranks 29th in achievement, while top-scoring Minnesota finishes 27th in per-pupil expenditures. . . . "Only four prime-time television shows portray fathers who are both competent and involved" in lives of children, says National Fatherhood Initiative. . . . Journalists and scholars pick top 100 news stories of 20th century. Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki plus Japanese surrender during World War II come in first. Clinton scandal and impeachment finishes 53rd.

■ China bans direct selling, costing Avon $100,000 per day. . . . Russia signs $100 million deal with **Saddam Hussein** to reinforce Iraqi air defenses. . . . Paraguay's Congress votes to impeach president **Raúl Cubas** for refusing court order to jail ally Gen. **Lino Oviedo**. . . . Japanese translation of Iris Chang bestselling book *Rape of Nanking*, depicting Japan's wartime brutality in China, delayed because of security threats. . . . As Romania and Ukraine repeat invitations, Vatican says **Pope John Paul II** may fulfill long-held ambition to make first-ever visit to predominantly Orthodox countries.

■ Hottest trend among Latino politicians in California is enrolling in language courses, namely Spanish. *San Jose Mercury News* reports that Lt. Gov. **Cruz Bustamante** (D.) and others are working to sharpen their Spanish-speaking skills at Center for Bilingual Multicultural Studies in Cuernavaca, Mexico. **NR**

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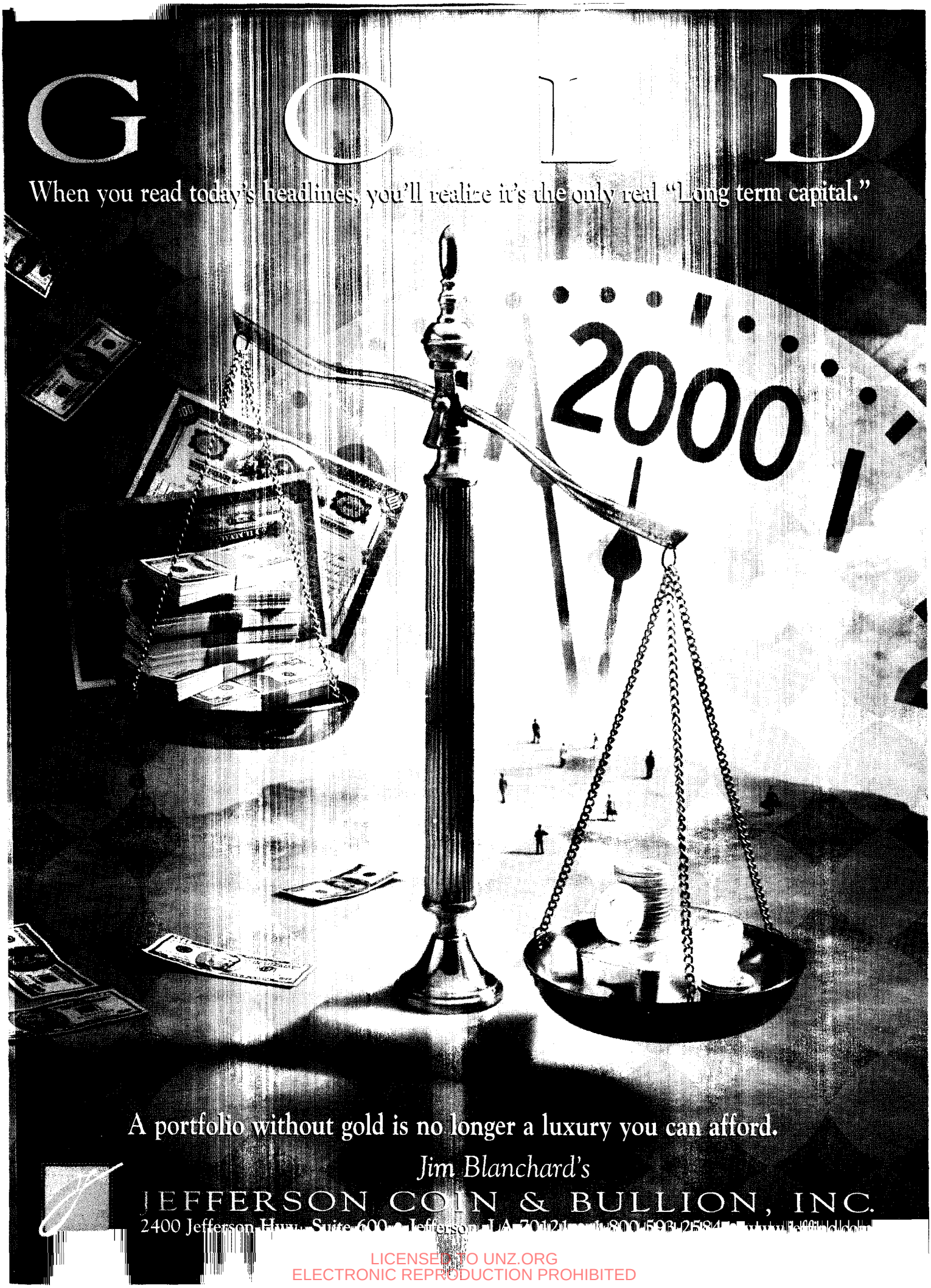
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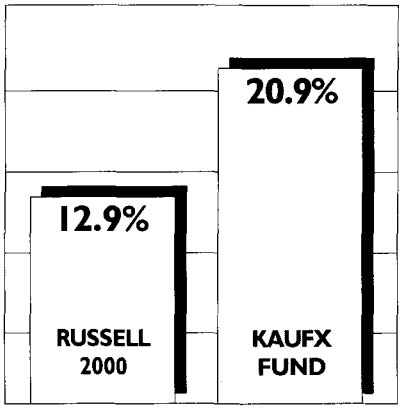

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■ TV producer Aaron Spelling (*Beverly Hills 90210*) is disturbed at the new trend toward teen-oriented films with rather adult themes—movies like *Cruel Intentions*, *American Pie*, and *Go*. Spelling told *Newsweek*: "I abhor some of these teenage movies. I think they're going too far." Is it the sex? The drugs? The increasingly frequent portrayals of, ah, the gentle art of self-love? Certainly not. "If they're going to have sexual affairs, I like to see condoms. We do it on TV. I think they should do it."

■ Last June *The New York Times Magazine* profiled an anonymous gay Marine who felt put upon by the policy of "don't ask, don't tell." The story emphasized how clean cut the soldier and his gay colleagues are—early to bed and early to rise, standing out at gay bars for their square appearance and military bearing. The article somehow failed to mention that the Marine, according to a scoop in *The Advocate*, a gay magazine, starred in homosexual pornographic films while he was on active duty. *Times Magazine* editor Adam Moss insisted that the Marine's off-hours film career "doesn't alter the story's truths."

■ Last October at Miami University of Ohio, racist and anti-homosexual flyers were posted at the university's Center for Black Culture and Learning. The messages sparked two days of demonstrations protesting the "lack of diversity" on campus. Seven students were arrested for disorderly conduct, leading to the sale of "Miami 7" T-shirts and a meeting between university president James Garland and Nathaniel Snow, head of the Black Student Action Association. Then police tested the flyers for fingerprints and concluded they had been put up by Snow and one of the arrested protestors. So does this count as a self-hate crime?

■ Mother Teresa needs two miracles to certify her sainthood. When she discussed abortion with President Clinton, she managed to embarrass him. Next?

Patricia Ireland Erupts

She blew her stack on Larry King.
For months, NOW's been belittling
The uncouth cries from trailer trash,
But when Juanita pulled the sash
She sort of snarled while going ape—
It's different, don't you see, with rape.
What fun it was to watch her blow!
She got to Gergen on the show.

—W. H. von Dreele

THE BROADDRICK CASE

Reasonable Doubt

A WORLD weary of discussing the pathology of President Clinton returns to the task, because the ante has been raised, from romping with interns, to rape.

There is good reason to be cautious about Juanita Broaddrick's story. The rape, if it occurred, occurred in Little Rock 21 years ago. Soon afterward, she attended a fundraiser for Clinton. When Paula Jones's lawyers approached her more recently, she brushed them away with an affidavit stating that "rumors and stories" about her and Clinton were "untrue." Mrs. Broaddrick has strung reporters along for months, refusing to go on the record.

On the other hand, her very reluctance to talk may mean that she is truly troubled by what she has to say. She has sought no money for her story. Norma Rogers, a friend who was with her in Little Rock in 1978, confirms that Mrs. Broaddrick told the same story then. Finally, several of her details—the bitten lip, the advice to use ice, Clinton's lugubrious appeal for forgiveness long after the fact but soon before his run for the White House—are sickeningly convincing.

What is not at all convincing is the president's reaction. Clinton handed off to David Kendall, who issued a minimalist denial—"Any allegation that the president assaulted Mrs. Broaddrick more than 20 years ago is absolutely false"—and a pledge of no further comment. What else could Clinton have done? Told Sidney Blumenthal that Mrs. Broaddrick was a stalker? Jabbed his finger? Attended a prayer breakfast? Considering the arias Clinton has woven out of "is," even the barebones response invites parsing. By "the president" did Kendall mean Jimmy Carter? Does Kendall deny that his client assaulted Mrs. Hickey (Juanita Broaddrick's surname at the time)? Endless lies prompt endless questions.

Lost, in all the legal thrashing early this year over how high a crime perjury or obstruction of justice is (only cuff level? over the head?), was the larger issue of fitness for office. We don't want to invest a man with the power to appoint judges, send men into battle, or address joint sessions of Congress whose only defense is that his crimes are minor. We expect a president to play an honorable role in the business of governing; we hope, when times require it, that he can lead. This president is incapable of doing either.

The stain of his dishonesty seeps into every field of activity. When he bombed Afghanistan and the Sudan, no one could prove basely self-interested motives. But no one could credibly dismiss them. When a supermarket tabloid tested the child of a Little Rock prostitute for DNA that matched his own, no one defended him preemptively, because they could not be sure that he was not the father. A negative result quashed that accusation, but not the problem. The most powerful man in the world is open to every doubt and innuendo.

And what of his country? One poll showed that 54 percent

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thought Broaddrick's allegations were probably true (only 23 percent thought they were false). But 65 percent said they didn't think the charges were worth investigating. So a significant portion of the electorate is content to muddle along with a probable rapist at the helm. And what else, they could reasonably argue, should they think? The statute of limitations long ago ran out on the offense. He won't resign. What other alternative is there, but to resign ourselves?

Lincoln said that slavery blew out the moral lights around us. Bill Clinton is only one man, not an institution. But he does his best to dim the lights. This is his legacy.

TAXES

Outclassed

SPEAKER LIVINGSTON lasted longer than the plan for a 10 percent tax cut, which Republicans are abandoning after only a month of halfhearted attempts to sell it. This is not a huge setback in itself, since they promise to cut taxes somehow and there is nothing talismanic about the 10 percent plan. More worrisome is that many Republicans drew back from the plan because they feared being pegged as the "party of the rich"—since well-off taxpayers provide the bulk of revenues, they would get the most money back from any proportional cut in rates. So now Republicans are talking about "targeting" less affluent groups for tax cuts.

As Alan Reynolds argues ("Rich Rewards," p. 24), this is bad policy. Targeted tax cuts will not promote savings if they exclude the very people who save the most; and they can even reduce incentives to work, save, and invest. Targeting also makes for bad politics. If it wipes out low-income voters' tax liability entirely, it expands the constituency for big government. If it merely makes the tax code more progressive, it makes it all the harder to cut taxes across the board in the future: Since "the rich" would pay an even larger share of taxes, they would get an even larger share of future tax cuts too.

There is no evidence that the class-warfare argument actually sways voters. There *is* evidence that capitulating to this argument has hurt Republicans. Between 1996 and 1998, according to the Voter News Survey, voters making over $75,000 a year swung 7.5 points toward the Democrats. Since this group accounted for 24 percent of the 1998 electorate, the defections accounted for a 1.8 point swing away from the GOP in the total vote (or, to put it another way, a 3.6 point shrinkage in the Republican lead). These are big, election-deciding numbers. Since November, Republicans have had a media-driven obsession with the need to attract more female and Hispanic voters; but they actually gained ground among both groups. The party's bigger problem is that Democrats are moving toward parity with it among the affluent. The GOP may not need to worry about being the "party of the rich" much longer.

But there is also an opportunity for the Republicans. It is becoming increasingly clear that the massive expansion of the stockholding class in this decade is also expanding the potential constituency for free markets. In early January, Rasmussen Research conducted the first major survey to break down public opinion not only by the standard demographic subgroups of race, sex, age, etc., but by whether the 6,400 respondents owned more than $5,000 in stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. Unsurprisingly, owning a portfolio increased a person's likelihood of favoring a capital-gains tax cut from 45.9 to 65.7 percent. More strikingly, the likelihood of being a *Republican* rose from 27.1 to 37.9 percent, and this effect obtained among 42 of the 44 demographic subgroups. (The results are summarized in a forthcoming paper by Richard Nadler for the Cato Institute.) Among married men, for instance, portfolio ownership made for a 7.1 point swing to the Republicans. Among people making between $20,000 and $40,000 a year, there was a 7.8 point swing in favor of the GOP. Among blacks, a 15.1 point swing. Outreach, anyone?

The interest of Republicans lies in promoting policies that appeal to the new investors as a constituency and that increase the size of that class: for instance, a universal IRA that people could use to invest toward homeownership, their children's education, health expenses, or retirement with no taxes on the accumulating balances. This policy, as the Cato paper reports, is extremely popular with all types of investors—much more so than Clinton's targeted tax credits. But those tax credits do have substantial support, especially with young investors, as would Clinton's USA Accounts. If Republicans offer this rising constituency nothing but opposition to Clinton's policies, they will be throwing away support that should naturally be theirs.

A RECENT CONVERSION

I saw a bulb illuminate
Above Bill Clinton's head;
It lit up when he realized
Technology he'd fed
To Ding and Dong and Won Hung Lo
Is pointing straight at us:
Now—bang the church bell loudly—Bill
Gets off a backroom cuss.

—W. H. VON DREELE

LATIN AMERICA

Truth Omission

GUATEMALA'S "Historical Clarification Commission" has just issued its report, part of that country's bid to come to grips with its very bloody past. While the commission's guesses

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at just how many people were killed differ somewhat from a previous Catholic Church-related estimate, both reports were serious and worthwhile. Like the nations of Eastern Europe emerging from Communist rule, South Africa, and many other Latin nations, Guatemala established this "truth commission" not to punish crime, but to try to learn what happened and why. The hope is that learning the facts will help lead to national reconciliation and solidify support for democracy and respect for human rights.

Predictably, the occasion has been used by the *New York Times* and others sharing its political perspective as an opportunity to remind us how evil the United States was during the Cold War. While the U.S. is not central to the commission's report, the *Times* instructed us in its lead story that "the United States gave money and training to a Guatemalan military that committed 'acts of genocide' against the Mayans."

In its usual fashion the *Times* has the moral of this story exactly wrong. The astonishingly high levels of violence and human-rights abuses in Guatemala reflected not an American presence but our absence. Guatemala's guerrilla war was small enough for its army to handle mostly on its own, and the country was rich enough to buy arms on the international market. Next door in El Salvador, where Soviet, Cuban, and Sandinista aid brought the guerrillas close to victory, the government needed massive American help in the 1980s. With it came human-rights lectures, American military trainers who would not countenance torture, threats to cut off aid if human-rights violations did not cease—and human-rights improvements.

This lesson about America's role in the Cold War the *Times* seems unable or unwilling to learn. Could we perhaps suggest a "Historical Clarification Commission"?

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ To: Friends
From: Wm. F. Buckley Jr.
Re: *The Things I Do to Get Fancy Jobs for My Critics!*

(Excerpt: *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms*, by Kai Bird, Simon & Schuster, p. 119)

Shortly before taking office [as President of Harvard], while vacationing on a Wisconsin lake, [Nathan] Pusey was briefed on his new duties by David Bailey, Harvard's secretary. Bailey told him that his first order of business would be to select a new dean for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "Dave had a list of five candidates," Pusey recalled. "At the bottom of the list was Mac Bundy. I didn't know Bundy, but the name rang a bell with me. I'd read William F. Buckley's *God & Man at Yale*. It made me sick to my stomach. And then I'd found an article by Mac Bundy in *The Atlantic* attacking Buckley. So I pointed to Bundy's name on the list and told Dave, 'He's the first fellow I want to see.'"

Later that summer, when Pusey finally met Bundy, he felt an immediate rapport. "I asked him then and there if he would become dean," Pusey said. "I never interviewed any of the other candidates."

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Forgive me for I have sinned. I read with interest the recent exchange in "Notes & Asides" in which it was decreed that "data" are plural. I have pondered the explanation and I find that I am still troubled by heretical thoughts. This note is my confession in hopes that the error of my thinking can be revealed to me.

With the advent of the digital computer a number of new concepts sprang forth on the world demanding to be named. In our hurry to name them we simply captured nearby words and forced them to serve in new roles. Thus a rectangular area on a computer display that provides the user a display of a process became a "window." A small "icon" on the display that allows a user to issue a "command" by clicking his "mouse" became a "button." For computers to process information it needed to be encoded so it could be stored in computer storage and processed by processors. We needed a name for this encoded information and we shanghaied the word "data" for this purpose. My heresy is that I think that this new word "data," being a synonym for "encoded information," is a substance that is measured, not counted, and that there is no plural form for it.

To see how this seems to work, consider a datum that I am using to send this message, your e-mail address—letters@nationalreview.com <mailto:letters@nationalreview.com>. It is a series of 24 characters from the English alphabet with two special characters to delimit the sections. Before it can be used to send this message it must be encoded (7/8 bit US ASCII) and it becomes a string of 26 bytes (208 bits) of data. I started with a single datum but, having encoded it, I now have data. To my ear, "26 bytes of *datum*" sounds odd and, besides, what then would the first ten bytes contain? If "data" in the sense it is used in data processing is plural, then what is a datum? A byte? A bit? A record? It is simply easier for me to think that there are two words with the same spelling but different construction. Thus, in data processing, the data are encoded and the resulting data is processed. The processed data is decoded and new data are displayed.

I humbly await correction.

Lee Haslup
Cary, N.C.

Dear Mr. Haslup: Your reasoning is very persuasive, and there is no doubt about it, that is how word-meanings evolve. But why do you begrudge the user's preference for the plural when the plural fits the situation? Or the singular? *That datum hardly contradicts the plethora of data elsewhere available.* What's wrong with that?

Cordially,

—WFB

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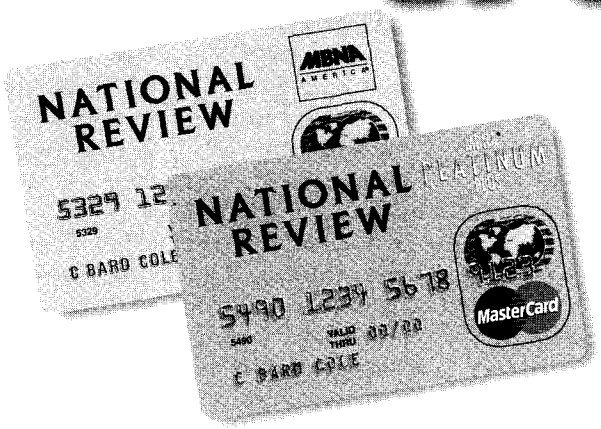
for National Review Readers



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■ THE MEDIA ■

The Mind of Maureen

What makes the *New York Times* columnist tick?

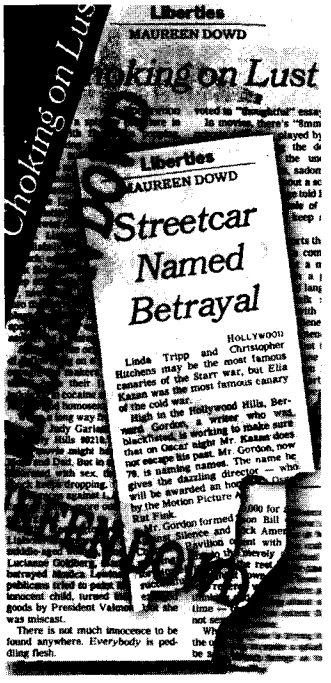
JOHN O'SULLIVAN

WHEN he was accused of not joining sufficiently harshly in the intellectuals' denunciation of Senator McCarthy and McCarthyism, Peter Viereck replied: "I am against hysteria, but I am also against hysteria about hysteria."

In the months after the House impeachment hearings were launched, the establishment media's consistent line was that the House prosecutors and Kenneth Starr were men in the grip of sexual obsessions and a witch-hunting hysteria. To be sure, President Clinton may have been lecherous, dishonest, and irresponsible. But these private sins were of little account in comparison with Starr's and the Republicans' public offenses. And though many pens were dipped in the finest vitriol to condemn these crimes, none etched more acidly than that of the *New York Times*'s Maureen Dowd.

Kenneth Starr was, at various times, "a stalker," "creepily obsessed," "the helpless victim of his cravings for ecstasy" who "couldn't stop thinking about [Monica Lewinsky's] thong underwear," which "inflamed his imagination" and "quickened his pulse" and "made him catch his breath." Yet he was also "an avenging evangelical prosecutor" who wanted "to overturn the '60s and restore [a] black-and-white moral code" in order to press "the Orwellian concept of sex crimes against the government." Likewise, the Republican prosecutors were "acting like ugly Americans abroad," "cheap hypocrites," "rabid tormentors" (this about Henry Hyde and David Schippers), "unforgiving and hypocritical," "a lynch mob" and—but this is surely an afterthought—"clueless."

If this hysteria about hysteria surprised readers, it was because only a few months beforehand Dowd's own imagination had been inflamed, her pulse quickened, and her breath caught as she herself stalked the president like, er, well, like an avenging evangelical prosecutor. He was "the priapic President," the practitioner of "Oval sex," "the Grand Canyon of need," "the Highchair King," "the wild child President" who had twisted the White House into "a machine that spews out alibis more urgently than policies." Nor has she even now given up excoriating Clinton for such sins as his "moral and ethical sloppiness" and his "Madonna–whore construct."


Liberties
MAUREEN DOWD
Choking on Lust
Liberties
MAUREEN DOWD
Streetcar Named Betrayal

What then distinguishes Dowd's hysteria from the supposed hysteria of Starr and the GOP, apart from the fact that, like the French nuclear deterrent, hers is pointed in all directions? The only difference of principle seems to be that she believed Clinton should not be impeached and they impeached him. She even accepted that the impeachment charges were more or less true; still she thought that loss of office would have been too severe a response.

In her attempt to hold these conflicting hysterias in some sort of balance, Dowd underwent a literary metamorphosis. She began to write like a Clintonite groupie, forgetting her usual cool inventions and reaching instead for the semi-manufactured phrase and the focus-tested argument. She became, in fact, the Eleanor Clift of journalism. Phrases that sounded familiar even before they were written crept into her columns. For instance: "They have made the case that Bill Clinton is selfish and promiscuous. They have not made the case that two elections should be overturned." Or: "It's worse to refuse to forgive than to need forgiveness." Or: "He was entrapped into lying by his scheming political enemies, a hideous cabal . . . " And so on.

Of course, Dowd was far from alone in giving voice to these clichés. The entire Beltway establishment suddenly began to spout them or something like them. Other columnists too began responding to the same instructions from the zeitgeist. The oily Clintonian excuses were simply more noticeable in Maureen Dowd's otherwise brisk prose.

What had happened, of course, is that the removal of Bill Clinton had become a possibility. A remote one, to be sure, but a possibility nonetheless. And since that would have been a victory for the very worst sort of Republican, even those Washingtonians who had loudly deplored the president's morals had to find some way of opposing it. James Carville came obligingly to their rescue. He had long been vilifying Starr in preparation for just such an emergency, and he had a ready supply of slanders in his shop window. In short order, the overzealous, partisan, out-of-control prosecutor began to stalk the columns of the nation—Dowd's included. After all, she had the burden of writing something about Washington twice a week.

Yes—twice a week, from ten to four
For half the year, OR EVEN MORE,
With but an hour or two to spend
At luncheon with a city friend.
(With apologies to Hilaire Belloc.)

That may not seem an undue burden. Yet consider, for a moment, how Dowd reached her present eminence. She burst upon the American dream in 1991 with a front-page article in the Sunday *New York Times* retailing the allegations

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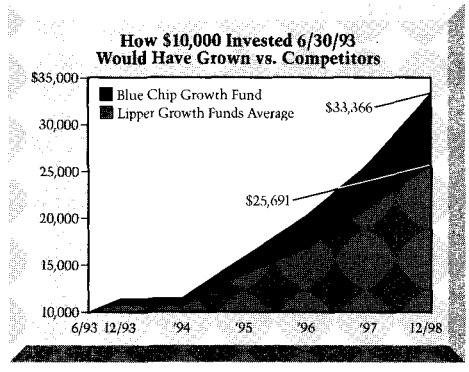

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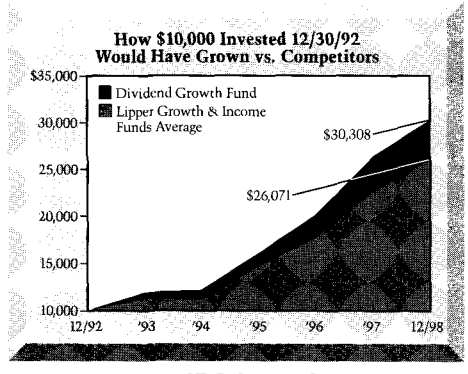

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Dividend Growth Fund: **15.04%**, **20.48%**, and **20.29%** are the fund's average annual returns for the 1-year, 5-year, and since inception (12/30/92) periods as of 12/31/98, respectively. Figures include changes in principal value, reinvested dividends, and capital gain distributions. Investment return and principal value will vary, and shares may be worth more or less at redemption than at original purchase. (Source for Lipper data: Lipper, Inc.) **Morningstar proprietary ratings reflect historical risk-adjusted performance as of 1/31/99. These ratings may change monthly and are calculated from the fund's 3- and 5-year average annual returns in excess of 90-day Treasury bill returns with appropriate fee adjustments and a risk factor that reflects fund performance below 90-day Treasury bill returns. The fund received 4 stars for the 3- and 5-year periods. The top 10% of the funds in an investment category receive 5 stars, and the next 22.5% receive 4. The prospectus contains more complete information, including management fees and other charges and expenses. Please read it carefully before you invest or send money. T. Rowe Price Investment Services, Inc., Distributor.

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in Kitty Kelley's biography of Nancy Reagan that the former First Lady had had an affair with Frank Sinatra, conducted in the White House by such discreetly clandestine means as telling the staff that she would not take calls even from the president when Sinatra was alone with her. All this was retold with quickened pulse and inflamed imagination as if it were all more or less true. Indeed, Dowd noted, with a significant nod, that Kelley's earlier biography of Sinatra had not been challenged in the courts despite threats. There was no sign amid the prurience of any embarrassment on Dowd's part at her venturing into what she now calls "the new Comstockism, the intrusion of moralism and politics into private lives." But since Nancy Reagan was the "cold and glittering icon for a morally vacuous era," she was presumably a fair target for Dowd's, and Kelley's, moral disapproval.

Thus launched on a great booster-rocket of gossip, Dowd became the *Times*'s social chronicler of the Bush administration and of the 1992 election. In this role, she was superb. She had cultivated a wide range of sources, conservative as well as liberal, since she seems to have realized early in the administration that the leakers in it would in the main be discontented conservatives. Bush's preppie goofiness was foreign enough for her to find him curiously interesting, yet he was also sufficiently in thrall to the liberal pieties of Washington for her to find him decently simpatico, for a Republican. She is a natural reporter whose verbal imagination is stimulated by both the personal qualities of her subjects and the oddities of the passing scene. And the *Times* allowed her unusual latitude to pursue the kind of opinionated reporting that was once one of the glories of American journalism (H. L. Mencken, Murray Kempton) but that the journalism schools now prohibit as an illegitimate mixture of news and comment.

All this inspired her to produce funny, shrewd, and observant pictures of the Bush White House and, more broadly, of the Washington political scene. Her profile of "budget czar" Richard Darman, for instance, was not only an accurate depiction of his power and methods in the White House, but also a witty listing of the rules for success (flatter up, get control of the paper, dare to be petty) that were common sense inside the Beltway but would strike most Americans as evidence of bad character. As 1992 progressed, moreover, she sensed the shift towards "change" as represented by Clinton, but her campaign reports gave fair warning that the country was not seeing the real Clinton, if there was one:

> "This is not going to work if these people just walk up," he snapped at the agent, his body tense and his eyes hard. But as he started moving toward the crowd again, he transformed his face back into the political mask of the easy-going country boy and resumed his loose, unhurried gait.

Such far-sighted reporting earned her a column on the *Times*'s op-ed page when Anna Quindlen vacated the liberal Irish Catholic woman's seat there. Writing a regular column, however, requires a steady stimulus of some sort. With William Safire, the stimulus comes from reporting, since he continues to break stories in his column. But Dowd seems to have given up all that with a sigh of relief; she now reports on what she has read in the newspapers and seen on television. Well and good. Some of the finest columns are written from such material by well-stocked minds with a capacity for abstract philosophical criticism. Charles Krauthammer comes to mind. Dowd, however, though far from stupid, seems not to possess a taste or talent for hard-edged logical analysis. A practical substitute for such reasoning is to possess such outlandish opinions on everything that reality itself, experienced as a stream of outrageous surprises, is a constant stimulus (and the reader is drawn to the column by simple curiosity as to what the columnist can possibly say next). Garry Wills is a case in point. But Dowd is a writer of relentless orthodoxy who almost never goes out on a limb. She contains multitudes of Georgetown dinner parties. Her specialty is putting the generally approved view with extra zing and added paradox.

Where does that leave her? Well, it left her in a recent column defending Elia Kazan, whom the Hollywood establishment has now come round to forgiving—but on the brightly clever grounds that he was to be preferred to "Christopher Snitchens," and that not because Kazan had been right to reveal the names of Hollywood figures who were active but covert supporters of a genocidal, anti-Semitic, and aggressive Stalinist regime—perish the thought—but because his "treachery" was on a far grander scale.

Not hysteria exactly, but a mind striving for effect at the end of a very short tether. Maybe Maureen Dowd should hit the campaign trail again. **NR**

■ THE HILL ■

The Limited

Depleting GOP talent.

KATE O'BEIRNE

ARE term limits a good idea in principle? And what would their political effects be in practice? Thoughtful conservatives have disagreed among themselves on these questions ever since the term-limits movement started to stir. And since 1995, when the Supreme Court prohibited states from imposing term limits, they have had disagreements about the wisdom of the movement's fallback option—voluntary term limits. Republicans' tenuous hold on the House is making the debate more than academic.

Some of Congress's most effective conservative members won't be running for re-election in 2000 because they promised not to. The ten House members who pledged that the 106th Congress would be their last include Republicans Charles Canady of Florida, Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, Mark Sanford of South Carolina, and Matt Salmon of Arizona. All of them have announced their intention to stick to their pledge.

Both sides of the debate over self-limits are seizing on these retirements as evidence. The departing members are to a man convinced that term limits benefit Congress, but many of those staying behind blame term-limits pledges for the loss of such exceptional members. "Term limits hurt conservatives because we're the only ones who adopt them. Boehlert and Shays [two liberal Republicans] will be here forever,"

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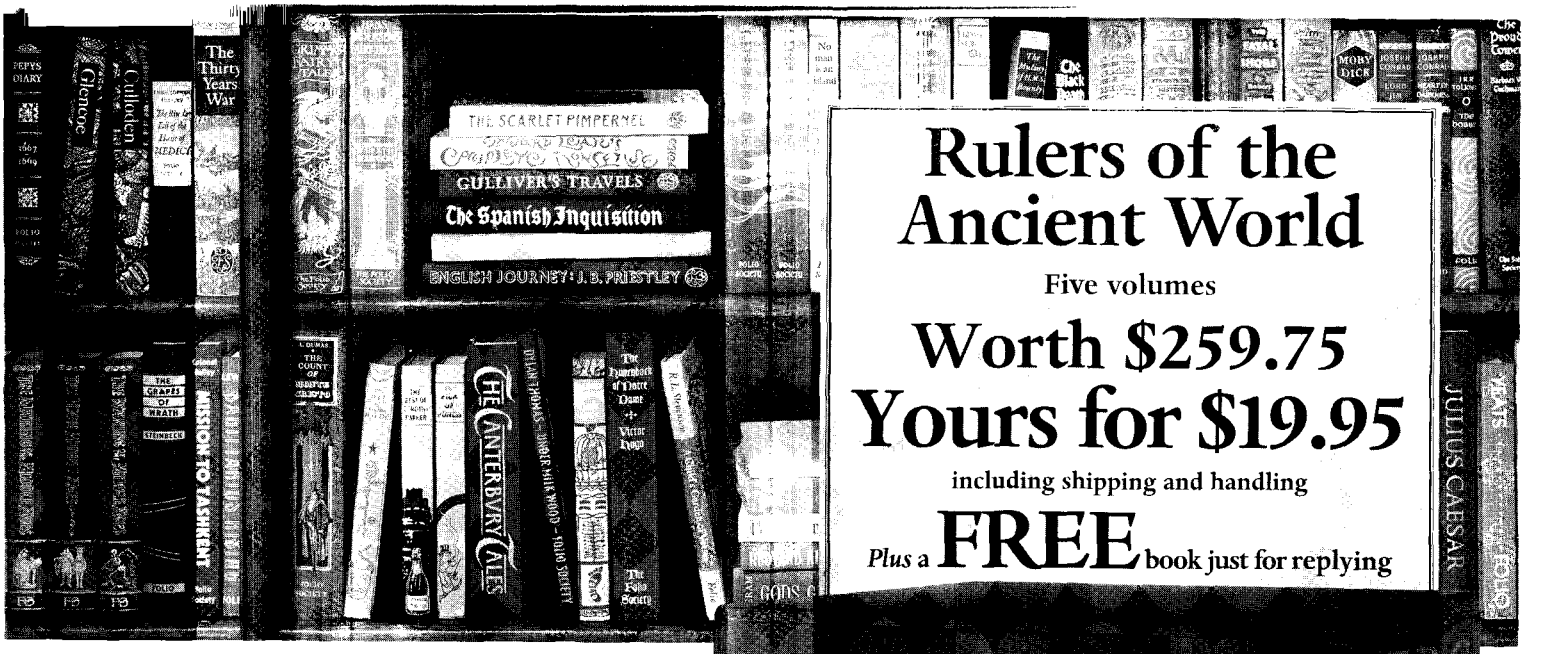

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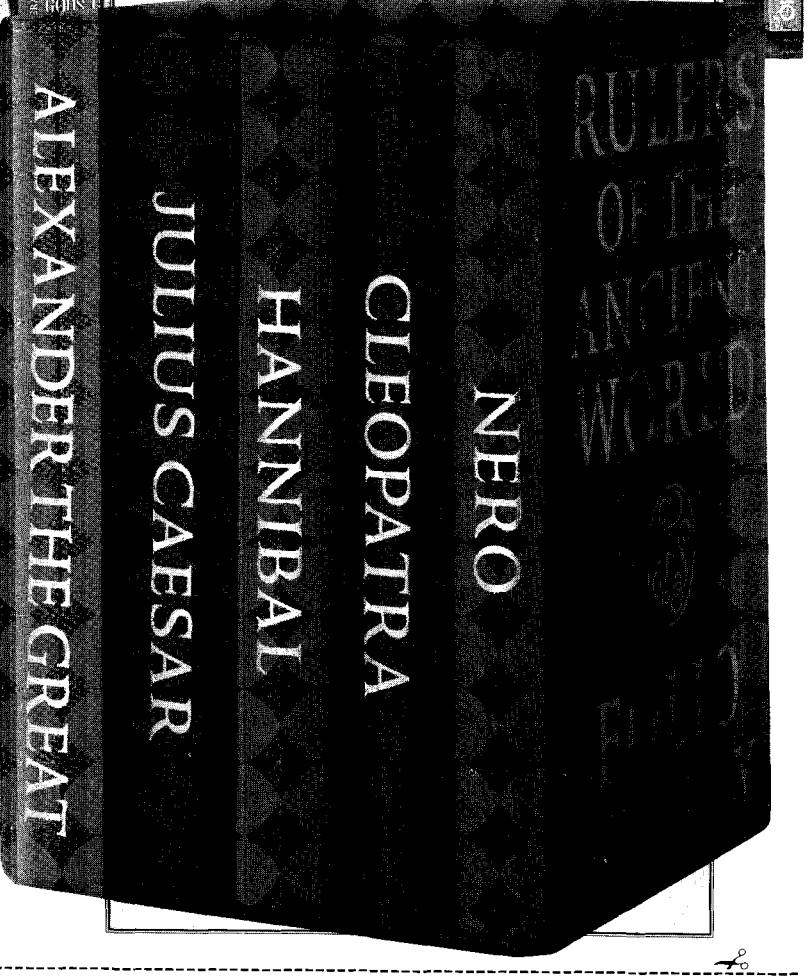

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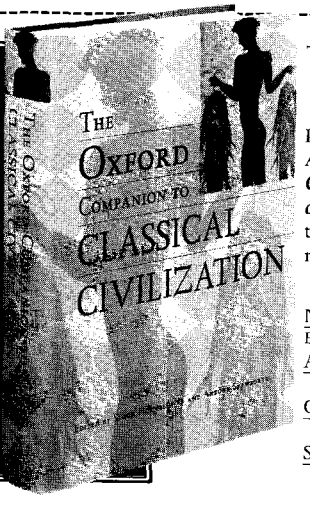

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declares one veteran conservative staffer who labels Canady "a treasure." To say nothing of the partisan impact: Thirty-seven Republican incumbents in the House have limited their terms, compared with only ten Democrats. The eleven Senate incumbents who have limited their terms are all Republicans.

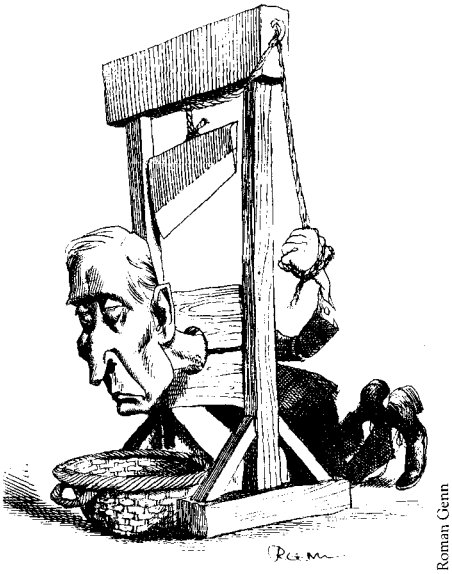
No wonder the Republican leadership is encouraging some GOP members to wiggle out of their pledges and run for re-election in 2000. A couple of self-limited incumbents are reconsidering their commitments. Washington Republican George Nethercutt pounded Speaker Tom Foley in 1994 for going to court to block a voter-approved initiative to limit congressional terms. He pledged to serve just six years, but now says that such a short term in office "is probably not enough."

But pledge-breaking carries risks of its own. Paul Jacob, the combative executive director of U.S. Term Limits, expects to spend $20 million in the 2000 elections—with a large portion of that money devoted to underscoring the importance of keeping promises. His group has already put up a billboard with a pointed (and unsarcastic) message in Nethercutt's district: "Thanks for keeping your word." Jacob recognizes that Republican leaders want an incumbent defending that swing district's seat in 2000, but he argues that incumbency might not trump integrity. "Nethercutt is the weakest Republican who can run because he'll have the broken pledge around his neck."

Just as Republicans are more likely than Democrats to adopt term limits, for the time being they are also more likely to be punished by voters for a change of heart. Marty Meehan, the only Democrat who promised to leave in 2000, is being urged by local newspapers in his Massachusetts district to abandon his pledge. His overwhelmingly Democratic district prohibits a credible threat to his re-election.

It won't be any consolation to Republicans sweating out 2000, but Jacob believes that there will be a better bipartisan balance of the self-limited in the future. He attributes the current imbalance to the support of the fledgling movement by frustrated Republican voters in the early 1990s. Now the gap is closing: In 1998, eight Republican incumbents adopted the pledge, as did four incumbent Democrats. Among freshman pledge-signers, there are seven Republicans and three Democrats. Jacob, a libertarian, also believes that self-limits promote the small-government agenda: "We lose our best guys only if we leave them in Congress," he insists.

Explaining why some of the bravest conservative congressmen are pledge-takers poses a chicken-or-egg problem: Did the term limits encourage their principled stands on so many issues, or did they take the pledge because they were principled, non-Washington-oriented conservatives to begin with? The congressmen themselves strongly believe the former. "I will campaign for term limits for the rest of my life," declares Tom



Roman Genn

Coburn. "The longer I've been here, the more I believe in it." He also better appreciates the allure of Washington: "Those not willing to keep their pledges provide evidence that they've already changed." He is convinced that he was re-elected in 1998 with 58 percent of the vote, even though Democrats account for 76 percent of voters in his Oklahoma district, because he is seen as "fiercely independent" and "absolutely honest."

So devoted was Coburn to the citizen-legislator ideal that he maintained his OBGYN practice while in Congress. He hopes to amend congressional ethics rules to make it easier for members to keep their other careers while serving in Congress. Because he anticipated only a six-year congressional career, Coburn explains that he had no fear of abbreviating that career by taking controversial positions. A committed pro-lifer, he founded the Congressional Family Caucus and reassures conservatives who lament his leaving, "I guarantee you there are thousands of Tom Coburns out there." He has recruited a GOP successor ("not a lawyer") who has already taken a pledge to serve just three terms.

Charles Canady promised to serve only four terms when he ran in 1992 in a Republican district as a strong supporter of Florida's "Eight Is Enough" term-limits initiative, which voters overwhelmingly approved. "There are costs to term limits, but the benefits will exceed the costs," says Canady, who predicts that retiring conservative members will be replaced by other conservatives.

"When you start off, eight years seems like forever," he says. But the time went by quickly because Canady was so busy. Most recently a House manager for the Senate impeachment trial (sic), Canady also has a record of legislative achievement that tops those of far more senior members. He has been chairman of a Judiciary subcommittee since his sophomore term, and he has used his position to bring landmark legislation to the House floor: a ban on partial-birth abortions, the Defense of Marriage Act, private-property protection, lobby reform, prison reform, English as the official language, and constitutional amendments on school prayer, tax limitation, flag burning, a balanced budget, and—of course—term limits. He has also been the leader of House efforts against preferences based on race or sex.

Like the other term-limited members, Mark Sanford is refreshingly modest about the requisite job qualifications for Congress. "There are 600,000 people in my congressional district, and I'm not the only one who can be a citizen-legislator," says Sanford. He believes that his six-year limit has "lowered the risk in political decisions" and in his case allowed him to grasp the "third rail" of American politics by promoting a plan to privatize Social Security.

The merits of self-limited terms shouldn't be oversold: Henry Hyde would be a fine congressman if he spent ten more years in D.C., while Ted Kennedy was bad news the minute he got there. But the Republican leadership should stop leaning on members to break their pledges. Three more congressmen like Coburn, Canady, and Sanford are worth ten time-servers. **NR**

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GOLFING NEWS by Charlie Allen

Two New Driving Irons Challenge Woods on Distance. One Sets a World Record; the Other Is One Yard Short.

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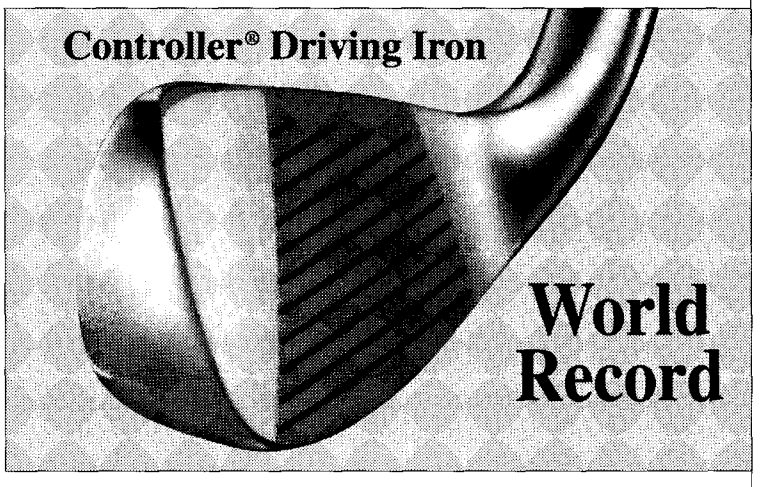

YALESVILLE, CT– The same small Connecticut company that created a golf ball that *flies* too far has introduced two new driving irons that *hit* too far; way too far if you happen to sell woods. Doug Reed, a PGA pro, set a World Record with a 339-yard shot from the grass with the company's 17° driving iron; and Mike Smith, another PGA pro, missed by one yard matching the longest shot ever – 358 yards, according to the Guinness Book of Records, with the company's 12.5° Tee Shot driving iron.

These are troublesome distances for wood manufacturers, but that may not be their biggest worry. *These clubs keep the ball on the fairway*, a characteristic drivers and fairway woods sorely lack. Official statistics show that even the top ten money-makers on the Tour

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miss the fairway with their driver 25% of the time. So don't feel alone if you have trouble with your woods, relief is on the way. A company spokesman told me this.

"We made these clubs for golfers who are fed up spraying shots left and right with their driver and 3-wood. And millions do. If the best ten golfers in the business have trouble with woods, imagine how tough they are for the rest of us. So we designed the Controllers (the clubs' name).

"Our initial test with the Controllers showed that a mid-80's golfer could get 30 to 50 more yards off the grass with our 17° Fairway Controller, and outhit his driver by 5 yards with our 12.5° Tee Shot Controller. Comments from other pros, including a former Master's champ, tell us that these are the clubs of the future.

"But power without accuracy doesn't cut strokes, and that's where we have wood manufacturers by the throat. The Controllers are not only more accurate than woods, they are *three times more accurate than regular long irons*, according to an independent test."

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The Controller driving irons have a patented "invisible" curve (you can feel it, but barely see it) across their hitting surface that *tames* the stronger gear effect and draws off-center shots back to the middle of the fairway. It's a major golfing breakthrough and, along with their massive power, probably makes the Controllers the longest and straightest clubs in golf today.

One golfer told me, it was "...the first time I've played 18 holes and never left the fairway." Another said he cut six strokes, and vowed he would never play with his driver or 3-wood again.

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So let me ask you. Do you have trouble with woods? If you do, there's no risk testing one or both of these new, super irons. The company will refund their price, if their unique combination of World Record power and patented accuracy doesn't cut 5 to 10 strokes off your score, and you return them within 90 days.

To try one or both Controllers, call the company direct at **1-800-285-3900** anytime or day, or send your name, address and check (or cc number and exp. date) to NGC Golf **(Dept. DS-717)**, 60 Church St., Yalesville, CT 06492. The steel shaft Controller Tee Shot (12.5°) and Fairway Controller (17°) cost $89.00 each. Both cost $159.00. The graphite shaft models cost $119.00 each. Both are only $219.00. Their new big butt shaft (called TurboTip) costs $135.00 each; both are $239.00. Add $12.95 s/h/ins. CT and NY add sales tax. No P.O. boxes. Specify right or left handed, regular or stiff flex, men's or ladies'.

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■ PUBLIC POLICY ■

Private Parts

The government will soon know everything about you.

JOHN J. MILLER

LAST December, Iceland's parliament approved a plan to compile an elaborate computer database containing every Icelander's medical record, family history, and DNA profile. By the time this experiment is complete (the idea is to make the world's most isolated gene pool available to researchers examining hereditary disease), it is possible that no government in history will have systematically collected more sensitive information about its citizens. What has made it all possible is the country's socialized health-care system, which has maintained detailed patient files on Icelanders since 1915.

The United States can't mimic Iceland because its gene pool is too diffuse (Melville: "You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world") and because it lacks the centralized medical records and genealogies of a national health-care system. But Iceland shows that governments are learning how to harness the power of technology in ways that imperil personal privacy and, ultimately, individual freedom. Bureaucracies may have gathered information in the past, but their ability to store and retrieve data was severely limited. Now, thanks to the digital revolution, it isn't, which makes keeping the information away from government in the first place increasingly important.

There are constant pressures for more government collection of data. A central part of President Clinton's health-care plan entailed issuing every American a "health security card" that would guarantee coverage; he waved around a prototype of this quasi-national I.D. card during a 1993 speech to Congress. Clinton would have created a national database containing medical information on every American. Without such centralization, after all, there could be no government-run health-care system that rations services.

The threat of a national health-care database only went underground following the GOP takeover of Congress. In 1996, Clinton allies working on the Kennedy-Kassebaum health-care bill inserted a requirement that every American receive a "unique health identifier" so that government officials and insurance companies could compile cradle-to-grave medical records on the entire population. Last summer, public pressure forced the administration to put the enabling regulations on hold, and the October budget agreement requires congressional approval before they can ever be implemented. Yet the regulations weren't repealed, meaning that health-care I.D. numbers are in suspended animation, waiting to be revived.

In contrast, the national worker registry made it into law. Approved by Congress in 1996, it links records kept by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Social Security Administration to provide companies with an allegedly fail-safe method for determining whether prospective employees are illegal immigrants. When the pilot program expires in two years, there will be a drive to adopt the system nationally. If that happens, every hiring decision made in the United States will be subject to government approval.

Worse is what the system may eventually become: an incredibly powerful tool for imposing even more stringent employment regulations. In December, the Labor Department proposed that all companies doing business with the federal government disclose the name, age, sex, race, and salary of their workers when they undergo routine affirmative-action audits. It can't be long before somebody decides to link this information with the worker registry and monitor employment discrimination—essentially forcing companies to hire and promote by numbers.

Already, additional uses are being floated for the worker registry. Last year, Rep. Steve Horn, a California Republican, tried to enlist the worker registry in combating voter fraud. Others have suggested using it to track gun sales. It doesn't take a sinister imagination to see the worker registry used by the Internal Revenue Service for audits, or linked to criminal records to make sure former felons don't get bonded. Each small expansion will proceed with the finest intentions—few objected to a 1993 law establishing a database of child immunizations, or another one that helps states track ex-husbands behind in their child-support payments. On March 1, the Justice Department announced that a panel would study the legality of forcing everyone arrested to take a DNA test.

Another privacy grab is coming through banks. In December, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation proposed regulations demanding that banks adopt "Know Your Customer" rules. If those regulations are approved, banks will become surrogate law-enforcement agents, requiring them to determine the source of all deposits and to compile profiles of customers based on their financial transactions. If there is a sudden shift in behavior—perhaps caused by inheritance income, or cashing in a winning lottery ticket—customers will be marked as potential money launderers. They will be reported to something called the Suspicious Activity Reporting System, a searchable database housed in Detroit and used by the IRS, FBI, bank regulators, and a dozen other government agencies.

The real money launderers, of course, know how to game the existing system by masking their activity through small deposits. They will figure out "Know Your Customer," too, leaving everybody else with little financial privacy and more rules to obey. The good news is that "Know Your Customer" may get stopped in its tracks: Tens of thousands of people have filed complaints against the regulations during the formal comment period. The bad news is that the bureaucrats who want it will no doubt keep at it.

One of the happy developments of the 20th century is that George Orwell's vision of Big Brother never came to pass. Technology has been largely a force for liberation rather than oppression. But technology has finally brought us to a crossroads: Government can know everything about us all the time, or it can know only what we want it to. If the American public doesn't insist on the latter, it may be time to say, We have seen the future, and it is Iceland. NR

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WHAT DIVERSITY?

This past semester Accuracy in Academia's John M. Olin Conference Series traveled to Columbia University and asked if conservative ideas were still welcome in higher education. The answer they received from Columbia President George Rupp was an emphatic "NO!" Rupp dispatched a team of security guards to keep students interested in conservatism from meeting on campus. The gathering was forced to reconvene off-campus in a park, where a mob of activists shouted down speaker Dinesh D'Souza.

Soviet mouthpiece Angela Davis, professional bigot Khalid Muhammed, and human bull's-eye Salman Rushdie all have spoken recently at Columbia without "safety concerns" overriding their right to speak. Yet a group of students interested in conservative ideas is deemed a "security threat." Quite clearly, there are different rules when "politically incorrect" speakers come to campus.

Whether it's a dean of students at Cornell participating in a public burning of a conservative newspaper or a speech code at Brown designed to suppress thought that challenges the liberal establishment, administrators at our top schools are putting students on notice that support for "diversity" should not extend to the intellectual realm.

Are conservative ideas so powerful that they must be banned lest students become seduced? That's the message George Rupp and other bureaucrats are sending. While administrators are quite comfortable eradicating a diversity of thought, they shamelessly promote the most intellectually vacuous material under the banner of "diversity."

Activists call to silence Accuracy in Academia; Columbia enthusiastically complies.

*** Princeton's Center for Human Values recently hired Peter Singer, a professor who condones parents killing their newborns. He teaches, "It is speciesist to judge that the life of a normal adult member of our species is more valuable than the life of a normal adult mouse."**

*** Cornell offers "The Sexual Child," a class requiring pro-pedophilia readings and the viewing of pictures of naked children. A typical assignment complains, "boy lovers are so stigmatized that it is difficult to find defenders for their civil liberties, let alone erotic orientation." Opposing "cross-generational encounters," students learn, has "more in common with ideologies of racism than with true ethics."**

*** While the military's ROTC program is labeled unfit to meet in Yale lecture halls, the school's classrooms have been the site of such courses as "Drag Queens, Transsexuals, and Queers: Anthropological Approaches" and "Feminist and Queer Theory."**

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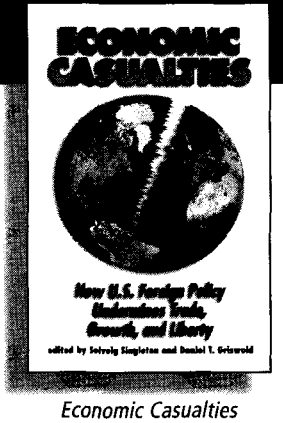

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■ ECONOMICS ■

Rich Rewards

Why a tax cut should go to the wealthy.

ALAN REYNOLDS

A LOT of Americans found out in 1993 that, thanks to Bill Clinton, they had become millionaires. The "millionaire's surtax" he had proposed in 1992 promptly metamorphosed into a new 36 percent tax bracket for two-earner families with incomes above $140,000, with an additional 10 percent "surtax" (making for a 39.6 percent rate) above $250,000. Tax rates were also increased on Social Security benefits, corporate profits, estates, and gasoline. But it was the old-fashioned "tax the rich" aspect of the new president's rhetoric and actions that raised the most doubts about his sincerity as a "new Democrat." The bill passed in 1993 without a single Republican vote in the House and Senate, and the issue did more than anything else to give the Republicans a majority in both houses in 1994.

In a position to do something about it, however, the Republican majority has only piddled away several years. Republican legislators just hate to pick up the *Washington Post* and find themselves denigrated as friendly to "the rich." Therapies for this condition, such as reading only James K. Glassman's columns in the *Post*, seem to elude them.

It's not that Republicans lack the imagination to dream up grandiose plans. There has always been more than enough rhetorical enthusiasm for repealing the tax code, abolishing the income tax, and all that. But Republican legislators will take action on tax cuts only if they are carefully designed to provide the least help to those supplying nearly all income-tax revenue, to leave

Mr. Reynolds is director of economic research at the Hudson Institute.

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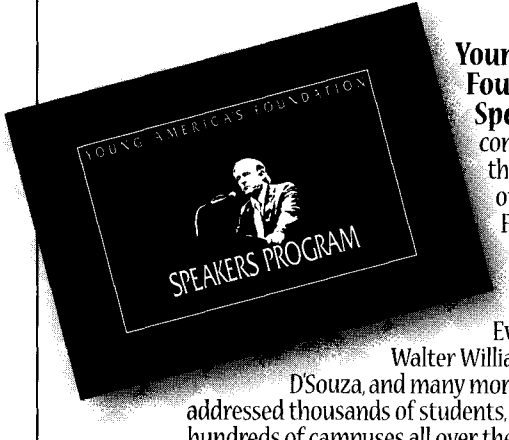

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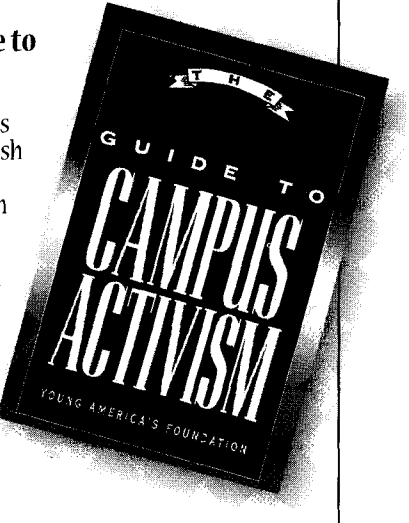

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marginal tax rates exactly where Clinton put them in 1993, and therefore to have no impact whatsoever on marginal incentives to work or save.

It's not enough to cut *average* tax rates, though Republicans are having increasing difficulty understanding the difference. For economic purposes, what matters is not simply how much a worker pays in taxes; it's how much more he would pay if he increased his income. If that marginal rate is high, he won't have much incentive to work or save more. When deciding whether to save another dollar, after using up stingy allowances for IRAs or 401(k) plans, only the marginal rate matters. When deciding whether a spouse's second income would help finance a child's education (rather than just disqualify the family for financial aid), only the marginal rate matters.

Not all "tax cuts" address the problem of high marginal rates. Republicans were eager to increase the size of an estate exempt from the death tax, for example, yet anything above that exempt amount is still taxed at confiscatory rates of 37–55 percent. The larger exemption is indeed a "tax cut," and one that benefits the rich. Yet larger exemptions from this or any other tax have literally zero effect at the margin, where decisions to do more or less are made. After an estate exceeds the exempt size, decisions to accumulate more assets by continuing to work or save are dependent on the marginal rate. Exemptions, credits, and other devices to cut tax burdens without reducing marginal rates are economically impotent.

The recent proliferation of tax credits for various politically favored age groups or expenditures suffers from this same confusion. Those who qualify for tax credits get a lower average tax on last year's income. If they make any special effort to increase their future income, however, they still face the same steep climb through five increasingly punitive tax brackets. In fact, tax credits have made upward mobility even more difficult by actually steepening the progressivity of the tax system: Several lucrative credits are phased out for anyone who is modestly successful in reaping rewards from years of schooling, work, and risky investing.

We have already paid a price for taxing this behavior so heavily. For three years following the 1993 tax blunder, the U.S. economy was unusually feeble, with growth averaging merely 2.7 percent during the normally powerful early phase of expansion. The economy got a welcome shot of Internet adrenaline in the past three years. Creating a whole new industry is like adding a new state or two to the GDP. But the economy will need more workers and more savings to keep rolling much longer.

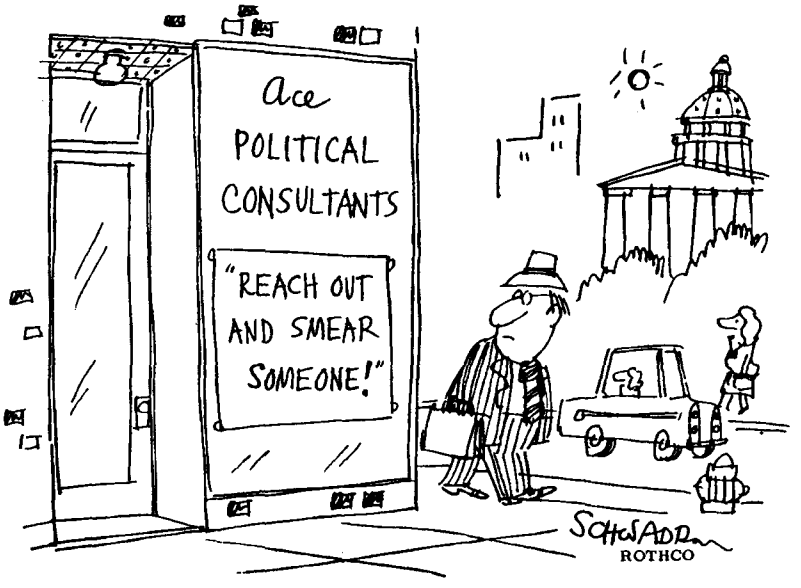
And that is precisely where the highest marginal rates are doing the most obvious damage. First, we are running short of willing and able workers. That is largely because punitive tax rates are encouraging premature retirement and driving skilled married women out of the labor force. (Many of them would be paying 36–40 percent on the very first dollar earned, if they were foolish enough to work.)

The second bottleneck is that personal savings are at a record low, making the economy unduly dependent on inflows of foreign capital. That is largely because the 1993 tax bill was aimed directly at the middle-aged professionals and managers who had previously done most of the nation's saving. If they actually paid the higher taxes, they had less left to save. In any case, with the government asking for 36–40 percent of interest or dividend income, saving in the most prudent ways is no longer so prudent. In those tax brackets, you go for capital gains, tax-exempt bonds, or nothing. Too often, it's nothing.

If elected Republicans are unwilling to stand up and say that it is still okay to earn a lot of money in America, who will? A first step could be for Congress to repeal the 36 percent tax bracket while leaving the 10 percent surtax in place. The 36 percent rate would thus revert to 31 percent, as it was before 1993; the surtax would make the top rate 34.1 percent instead of the current 39.6. Of all the tax cuts Congress could enact, this one would have the maximum impact on the economy for the least loss of revenue (even if the effects of economic growth aren't counted).

Would cutting marginal tax rates cause a huge shortfall in revenues? Actually, reduced tax avoidance and a more durable economic expansion would probably lead to an increase in revenues. There's no evidence that the high rates have brought in more money. The recent revenue surge has come from the lower tax on capital gains (which also boosted stock prices) and a nice rebound in corporate profits. Individual income-tax revenues amounted to only 9.5 percent of personal income from 1993 to 1997—down from 9.7 percent in 1987–89, when the top tax rate was 28 percent. Class warfare is not a lucrative game.

Repealing the 36 percent bracket may not be the stuff of bumper stickers. But it would be a great deal more potent and courageous than any tax law we have seen from Congress in a long time—or, sadly, are likely to see any time soon. **NR**



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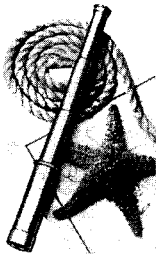

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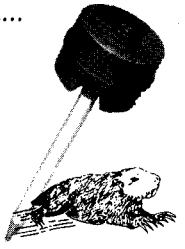

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■ HUMAN RIGHTS ■

Amnesty *v.* America

The United States as international outlaw.

ARCH PUDDINGTON

In a new report, Amnesty International describes "a persistent and widespread pattern of human rights violations," speaks of "entrenched and nationwide police brutality," alleges "inhuman and degrading conditions" in prisons, and contends that "racism and discrimination contribute to the denial of the fundamental rights of countless men, women, and children." The country in question is not a Middle Eastern dictatorship or African police state. Amnesty's new report is about the United States.

The assertion that the United States is a repressive society that systematically violates the rights of millions of citizens would strike most Americans as bizarre, if not outrageous. Increasingly, however, Amnesty and other human-rights organizations are arguing that life in America is marked by state-tolerated police violence, the persecution of women, racial minorities, and other less-favored groups, a brutal criminal-justice system, and the systemic mistreatment of immigrants and asylum-seekers.

While so sweeping an indictment of one of the world's most liberal and humane countries is not likely to convince many Americans that their freedoms stand in jeopardy, the report certainly will have an impact abroad, particularly among the country's many critics. Nor does Amnesty intend to let the matter rest. In addition to its highly critical report, Amnesty has launched a "worldwide campaign" against alleged U.S. rights abuses, an effort that, the organization hopes, will engage the energies of its millions of members in the United States and abroad.

Amnesty International is not the only human-rights group to single out the United States for attention. This past summer, Human Rights Watch issued a 450-page broadside which charged that the country was in the grip of an upsurge of police violence. Previously, Human Rights Watch had published a series of reports accusing the United States of, among other things, abusive treatment of illegal aliens. At the same time, a steady stream of special investigators from the United Nations has visited the United States to conduct inquiries into capital punishment, religious discrimination, and other rights issues. Human-rights groups also accuse America of abandoning the cause of freedom by opposing global covenants like the International Criminal Court.

One might easily draw the conclusion that a coordinated effort to target the United States is under way, especially since Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the U.N. rights investigators tend to echo one another's complaints, advance the same arguments, quote the same sources, and betray a common confusion over the basics of American democracy.

For sheer tendentiousness and factual inaccuracy, however, the Amnesty report, "The United States of America: Rights for All," is in a class by itself. Part of the problem can be traced to the authors' general dislike for this country and its economic system. The report speaks of a nation "beset by social problems, including unemployment, disease, and violent crime"; a nation riddled with "extreme poverty"; a nation in which "drug and alcohol abuse are rife"; a nation being carried away by a "rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment."

The truth, of course, is that America has a lower unemployment rate than most other developed democracies, that poverty has declined, that Americans are healthier and living longer, that drug addiction has ebbed, that violent-crime figures have decreased dramatically, that women and minorities are protected by layer upon layer of laws and court rul-

Mr. Puddington is a vice president at Freedom House.

Reading the Holocaust

Inga Clendinnen

"An important step toward an honest encounter with one of the great horrors of our past."
— Kirkus Reviews, February 2, 1999

Searching and eloquent, *Reading the Holocaust* is an uncompromising attempt to extract the comprehensible—the recognizably human—from the unthinkable inhuman acts of the Holocaust. Clendinnen explores the experience of the Holocaust from both the victims' and the perpetrators' points of view. She discusses the remarkable survivor testimonies of writers such as Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo, the vexing issue of "resistance" in the camps, and survivors' strategies for understanding the motivations of the Nazi leadership.

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ings, and that the United States has permitted a high level of legal immigration in both good times and bad.

In presenting America as a place where the rich and powerful routinely suppress the weak, the non-white, and the non-male, Amnesty seems to have embraced the most discredited clichés of domestic identity politics. It seems, in fact, that the advocates of identity politics increasingly are shaping the programs of human-rights organizations. Recent reports from Amnesty and other groups are often exclusively devoted to the plights of minorities, women, homosexuals, and smaller subdivisions of those groups. Human-rights organizations have even adopted the vocabulary of American political correctness: The Amnesty report makes reference to the "transgendered" as a victimization category and speaks of the police abuse of "sex workers," which is to say, prostitutes.

The influence of the civil-liberties movement is also apparent. This is particularly evident in the critical stance adopted by Amnesty and Human Rights Watch towards the kind of assertive, zero-tolerance community policing pioneered in New York City and adopted in a growing number of other cities. The enforcement of quality-of-life statutes has been credited with the revival of city neighborhoods from Greenwich Village to Harlem. In the process, the human rights of millions of city residents have been enhanced, which is why community policing has won such a wide following. But where most see a policy that has produced less crime and a safer and more civil urban environment, human-rights groups see a policy that amounts to a license for police violence.

Not surprisingly, the Amnesty report is highly critical of capital punishment in America. Amnesty regards capital punishment per se as a human-rights violation, and for years it has been engaged in a global campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. The current report makes a few telling points about capital punishment in the United States, especially regarding the execution of youthful offenders and the mentally handicapped. But the report's principal, and thoroughly unjustified, claim is that the implementation of the death penalty is racially biased. The report presents no serious evidence to back up this

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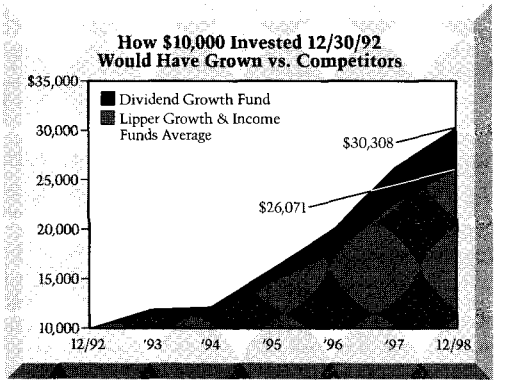

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charge; indeed, Amnesty found it necessary to dredge up death-penalty statistics from Virginia in the pre-civil-rights period. Just as unconvincing is the irrelevant fact that those convicted of murdering whites are more likely to receive the death penalty than those convicted of killing blacks, a disparity that, if anything, has led to a decrease in the number of black inmates on death row.

When their conclusions about American conditions are challenged, human-rights organizations invariably respond that they are simply holding America to the same standards to which America holds the rest of the world. This is sheer sophistry. By concentrating their energies on the United States, human-rights groups are attempting to make an end run around the democratic process by winning through international pressure what has been rejected by Americans at the polls and in the war of ideas. In the process, the human-rights community blithely ignores the extraordinary steps the United States has taken to create the world's most successful multiethnic and multiracial society.

A report that draws so exaggerated and unrealistic a picture of the United States is unlikely to advance the cause of reform, even in areas of legitimate concern, such as the treatment of immigrants. Moreover, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch are in danger of squandering their well-deserved reputations as global-rights watchdogs by trivializing genuine atrocities and raising questions about their commitment to non-partisanship and intellectual rigor.

In this regard, it would be wise for Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to pay heed to the decline of other political organizations that forfeited credibility and influence as they moved farther and farther from right reason. Americans for Democratic Action was the leading voice of U.S. liberalism until it adopted a stance of out-and-out opposition to most of America's foreign and defense policies. The peace organization SANE suffered a decline in influence after it became a shrill critic of the Pentagon. Likewise, the ACLU's standing suffered irrevocable damage after it adopted a posture of opposition to the fight against crime.

It would be a shame, and a waste, if our most valuable human-rights organizations descended into similar irrelevance—which they are presently on course to do. **NR**

■ **CAMPAIGN 2000** ■

The Diffident Candidate

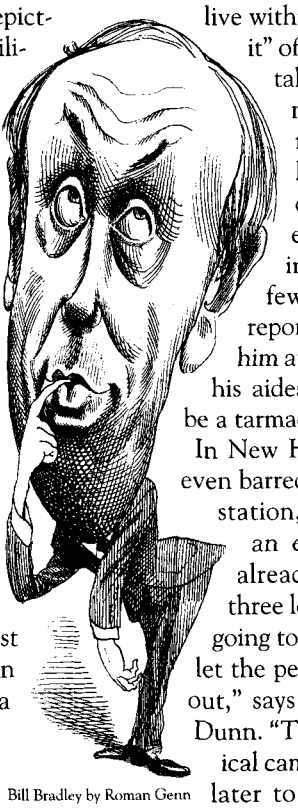
Bill Bradley's gentle campaign for president.

DAVID GRANN

THE first thing you notice about Bill Bradley on the campaign trail is his hands. Like Bill Clinton's, they're always moving, searching for something to hold. "The handshake is the threshold act, the beginning of politics," Joe Klein observed in *Primary Colors*, depicting the president's uncanny ability to literally touch his audience.

But unlike Clinton's, Bradley's hands are not usually grasping anyone else's. Instead, as he begins his first presidential campaign, the former senator and New York Knick usually pushes them deep into his pockets, like a teenager on a first date, or folds them across his chest, until he is gripping his own elbows. Speaking recently at the University of Iowa, surrounded by a knot of political reporters and basketball players, he held a piece of paper with both hands, folding it first in half, then in quarters, then in eighths, until it was only a speck.

Later, as he toured a high-tech training facility in Des Moines, he extended his hands gingerly to several students sitting in the front row. For a second, their small hands disappeared in his enormous palms. But before he had circled the room, he stopped and put his hands behind his back, his thumbs interlocking. "He is the un-Clinton," says one of his top aides. "He is not a natural politician. Some people confuse this with arrogance or shyness, but it's just the way he is: There's nothing slick about him."



Bill Bradley by Roman Genn

Mr. Grann is a senior editor at *The New Republic*.

Indeed, now that three of the main potential Democratic candidates—Paul Wellstone, Bob Kerrey, and Dick Gephardt—have announced they will not run for president, Bradley has emerged so far as the mythical Other, the unslick Willy: earnest, honest, non-partisan, and principled. In his first major campaign speech, Bradley attacked, among other things, "rhetorical flourishes," "fundraising," "polling," "tiny demonstration projects," the "poison of partisanship," and the "mechanics of winning"—in short, everything Al Gore and his mentor, Clinton, have mastered.

In contrast to Gore, who maintained that there is no controlling legal authority in fundraising, Bradley has vowed to live within "the letter and the spirit" of the law. He has refused to take PAC donations, or run mean ads, or cater to the media. In December, when he announced his candidacy, he did so on a Friday, ensuring it would be buried in the Saturday papers. A few weeks later, when reporters tried to catch up with him at the Cedar Rapids airport, his aides declared: "This will not be a tarmac campaign."

In New Hampshire, Bradley's staff even barred the state's dominant TV station, WMUR, from covering an event, though Gore had already granted the station three long interviews. "There are going to be a lot of times where we let the people in and kick the press out," says his spokeswoman, Anita Dunn. "This is not going to be a typical campaign." When I asked her later to describe what it will be like, she paused, then said with a half-smile: "The only word that comes to mind is . . . Bradleyland."

"Bradleyland," as other aides refer to it as well, has a long tradition. It is rooted in old-style reform politics, but more

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specifically in the character of Bradley himself. Ever since he was a boy growing up in Crystal City, Missouri, politics for him has had the whiff of something ignoble. The party boss gave off "an air of intrigue and corruption," he wrote in his memoir, *Time Present, Time Past*. "Around the Bradley house, he was thought to have been in cahoots with a bank competitor of my father's who later went to jail." Neither of his parents wanted their only son to be a politician, and they instilled in him an apolitical ideology, which helps explain his attempts to float, almost sanctimoniously, above the fray.

But there was something else at the center of his ambivalence. With his graceful, arcing shot from the baseline, Bradley has always carried around others' expectations of greatness. When he was only a teenager, people assumed that he would become a basketball legend. By 20, he was already seen, with his tall, Lincolnesque frame, as presidential. In a January 1965 profile of Bradley in *The New Yorker*, John McPhee discovered an almost mythical figure. "I have asked all sorts of people who know Bradley, or know about him, what they think he will be doing when he is forty. A really startling number of them, including teachers, coaches, college boys, and even journalists, give the same answer: 'He will be the governor of Missouri.' The chief dissent comes from people who look beyond the stepping stone of the Missouri State House and calmly tell you that Bradley is going to be President."

Yet, early on, Bradley showed the unease that has come to characterize his political career. He shied away from the press and fans. After winning basketball games, often with a last-second shot from the corner, he'd disappear from the locker room. He began not only to defy expectations but to purposely confound them. Rather than go to a big university on a full scholarship, he went to Princeton. Then, when he graduated and was expected to go into the NBA, he accepted a Rhodes scholarship and vanished from the public eye for two years. As he got off the plane in England before a group of expectant reporters who had never actually seen him, he pretended one of his friends was he, and he the friend.

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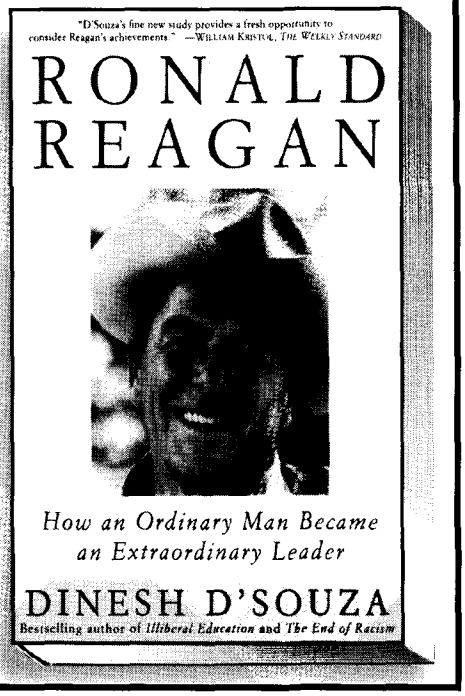
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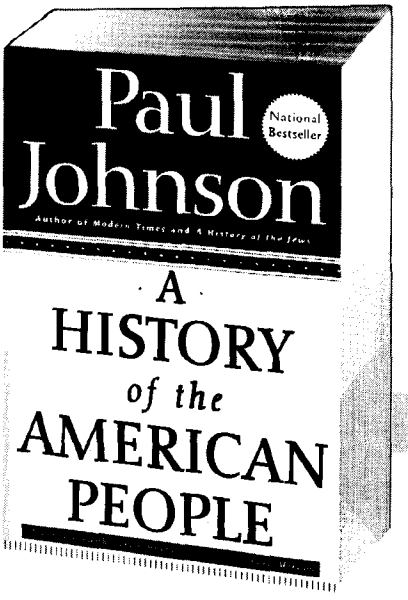

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More than a decade later, when he went into politics, he showed the same diffidence. In his first year as a senator, he refused to let the *Washington Post* trail him around for a profile. For two years, he granted interviews only to New Jersey papers. "I wanted to be a U.S. senator, not a star," he would say, sounding a little like a star. There was, in all of this, a certain fear of failure, of being consumed by his own celebrity. People, he explained, "have difficulty tolerating human shortcomings in someone whom they once invested with such an expectation of excellence." He constantly worried about measuring up—and being torn down. Once, after his friend Alan Simpson, the Wyoming Republican, was quoted several times in the major papers, Bradley told him to be careful. "When that light gets too bright," Simpson recalls hearing, "it can burn you the most."

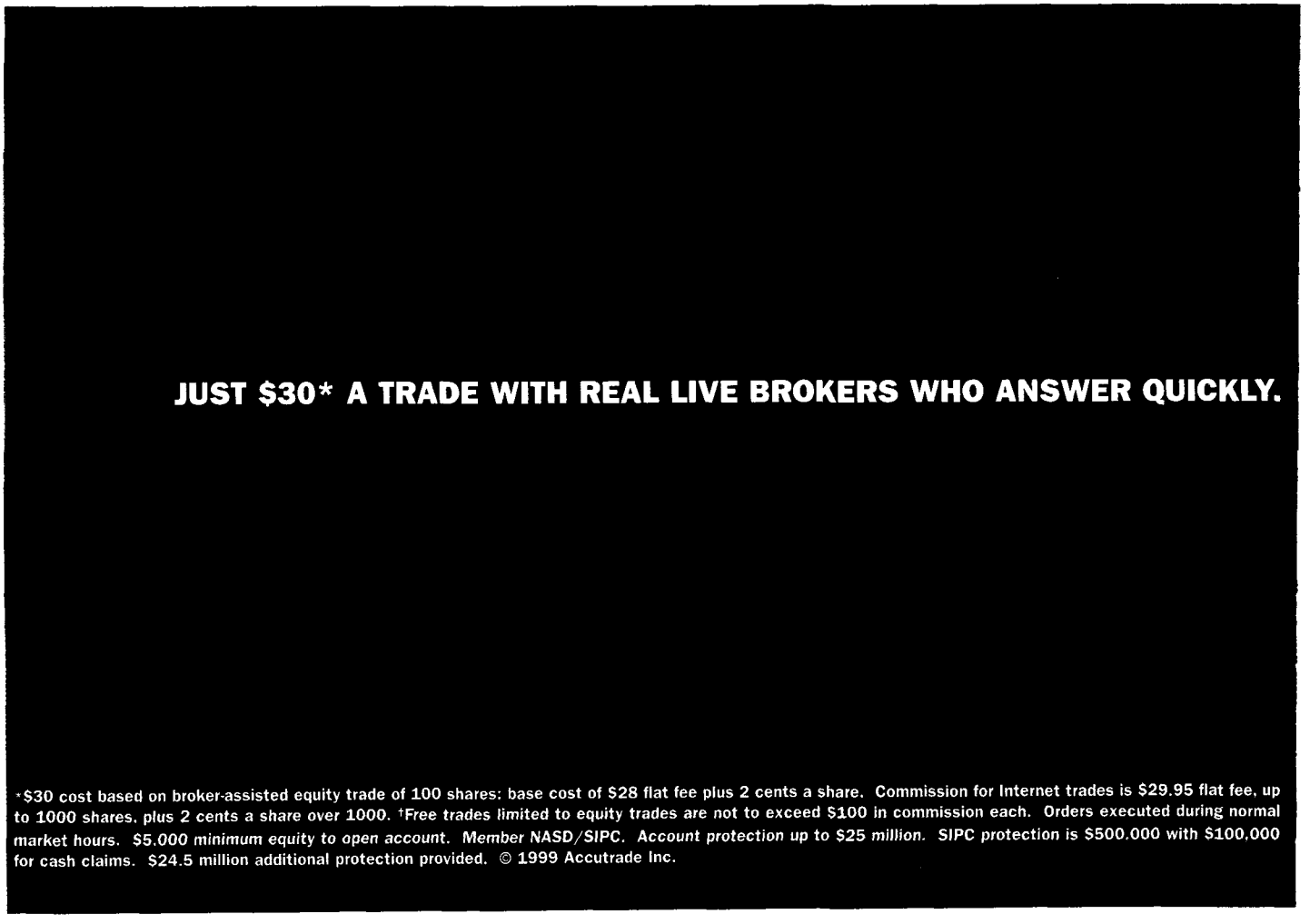
Indeed, politics for Bradley is filled with trapdoors. "When the red hot media burn is in progress, it seems that nothing escapes its flames," he once wrote. "The reporters are waiting at each stop on your campaign schedule. Just to see them, let alone to hear them, shortens your breath, dries up your voice, turns your face hot, tightens your chest, and makes you feel like an average guy about to be hit by the heavyweight champion."

In 1987, after he had passed his greatest legislative accomplishment, the Tax Reform Act, and was expected to run for president as the party's great hope, he ducked, to everyone's astonishment. Four years later, he ducked again, this time to most people's annoyance. Unlike Clinton, a Rhodes scholar who always saw in politics a chance to make himself, Bradley saw in politics only the opportunity to destroy himself. Throughout his Senate career, he now admits ruefully, he hid from the most explosive, and important, issues of the day.

Yet, despite all his efforts, he barely escaped the failure he had always so dreaded. In 1990, when he refused to take a stand on a controversial gasoline-tax hike back home, the public and press attacked him unsparingly. He won reelection by only a two-point margin. "Why are you doing this to me?" Simpson recalls his saying. In his memoir, Bradley expressed openly the sense of rejection: "My constituents began to resemble 'the crowd' from my basketball days, whom I could never trust to be constant. The bond I had imagined between me and my constituents had proved evanescent. In basketball, one was only as good as the last game. In politics, one was only as good as the last campaign. All the years of service seemed to count for nothing."

In 1996, Bradley retired from the Senate and slipped again into anonymity—only to reemerge three years later, when no one expected him.

"I like being the underdog," Bradley now says, as he chats with reporters on the basketball court at the University of Iowa. "I'd much rather be an underdog than the favorite." In his quixotic quest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for the White House, Bradley has tried to cultivate into a virtue his own discomfort with a profession so many voters similarly disdain. "I have not been a part of the partisanship that has shaped the debate the last couple of years," he says proudly.

There is, of course, something profoundly political about this kind of anti-politics—a way to appear above the shadiness of Washington, to seem, as liberal congressman Barney Frank once complained about Bradley, like the only honest person in your profession. And remarkably, for the most part it has worked. As media critic William Powers recently wrote in *National Journal*, Bradley has produced a body of journalism unlike anything seen since John F. Kennedy, another hero and self-conscious man of ideas. Indeed, a signed editorial in the *New York Times* seemed to endorse Bradley even before he had officially announced. "As everyone knows," the editorialist, Gail Collins, noted, "Mr. Bradley has the best shot."

But while Bradley has searched his soul for the last eight years, Gore has searched for something far more important in politics: votes. Within hours of the election last November, the vice president did all the tacky things Bradley hates: working the phones, fundraising, and doling out favors. In the old style of politics, Gore has used the power of incumbency to funnel money into key states like California and Florida and Iowa. "He has done all the little things you need to do to win," says Jerry Crawford, a lawyer who chaired the Clinton and Dukakis campaigns in Iowa.

During the campaign cycle last year through October, Gore's political action committee doled out $1.3 million to candidates; Bradley's, in contrast, gave out only $81,000. Not surprisingly, according to a recent poll in New Hampshire, 61 percent of Democrats favor Gore, only 9 percent Bradley. "He didn't set up early in New Hampshire or Iowa, which puts us behind," admits Anita Dunn. "He didn't do bulls*** stuff." Yet, according to most pols, it's usually the "bulls*** stuff" that wins. "I have sympathy for candidates like Bradley who go against the grain," Crawford says, "but most of them usually end up in Iowa's political graveyard."

When I finally sat down for an interview with Bradley during halftime at a high-school basketball game in Iowa, he insisted he was now at peace with himself and the game of politics in a way he had never been before. "This is a joyous journey," he said. But for a few seconds, he didn't move or look at me or smile. I asked him a question. No response. Again. Nothing. I wasn't sure if he was serious. Then suddenly, after a minute, he slumped his shoulders and grinned, and I realized that he was somehow mocking the whole process of being a presidential candidate, of sitting down for an interview and being probed. Afterwards, I followed him out of the gymnasium. For a second, he paused, then slipped his hands into his pockets and disappeared into the crowd. **NR**

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■ COVER STORY ■

Suburban Legends

The fight against sprawl is based more on anti-suburban animus than on facts.

STEVEN HAYWARD

VICE PRESIDENT Al Gore thinks he's found his Big Issue for the 2000 campaign: suburban sprawl. Sprawl, according to the vice president, is a "threat" to our well-being. We have to stop sprawl, he told the Brookings Institution in September, so that "our kids will see horses, cows, and farms outside books and movies." He is proposing that the Environmental Protection Agency promote "smart growth" by doling out billions to communities that use planning to preserve open space and avoid traffic congestion, overcrowded schools, and functional but inelegant development forms such as strip malls. And the EPA has said it intends to use its existing authority under the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act to strong-arm local governments into fighting sprawl.

Beyond these modest first steps lies a grab bag of visionary planning ideas that has attracted a diverse coalition of environmentalists, urban planners, and good-government reformers. The four hallmarks of smart growth are "urban-growth boundaries" that limit the amount of land available for development, higher-density residential development, more mass transit (particularly rail transit), and much more aggressive long-range urban planning.

On the left, it has become axiomatic that future development should be heavily regulated by enlightened planners. The usual gaggle of liberal foundations, including Turner, MacArthur, Joyce, and Charles Stewart Mott, have formed the Funders Network on Sprawl, Smart Growth, and Livable Communities, and have already shoveled millions to smart-growth advocacy groups. Behind the argument that we have to stop sprawl to preserve farmland and open space is a push to revive central-city urban renewal. People fleeing the city for the suburbs in search of better schools, lower crime, and quieter neighborhoods are blamed for sucking the life out of downtowns. Stopping the exodus to the suburbs, goes the argument, is key to saving central cities.

Gore is calculating that in a time of peace and prosperity, spending too much time in traffic is one of the few things that still exercise voters. The politics of sprawl follows the economic cycle, rising to a crescendo when housing starts reach their peak late in booms, and then disappearing during recessions. The last big controversy over urban growth peaked at the end of the '80s boom, when states like California, Florida, and Washington adopted growth-control measures. The economy slid into recession shortly thereafter, and the issue largely disappeared.

What's new today is that the controversy over the proliferation of suburbs has spread beyond the fast-growing regions of the west and east coasts to the heartland. Crusades against sprawl are in full swing in St. Louis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and other older metropolitan areas that 20 years ago went begging for growth of any kind. The 1998 election saw over 200 growth-control measures, sponsored mostly by environmentalists and planners, on the ballot in 31 states. Voters approved three-quarters of them.

SPRAWL TALES

But the threat of sprawl is vastly overblown. Indeed, there is a strong Alice in Wonderland quality to the whole campaign. In Chapter 7 of Lewis Carroll's book, we read, "The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it. 'No room! No room!' they cried out, when they saw Alice coming. 'There's *plenty* of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large armchair at one end of the table." The anti-sprawl crusaders, too, are myopically focusing on small corners of the country.

Developed land accounts for less than 5 percent of the total land area in the continental United States. The amount of land developed each year, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, is 0.0006 percent. Since World War II, the amount of

Mr. Hayward is a senior fellow at the Pacific Research Institute in San Francisco.

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land set aside for wildlife, wilderness conservation, and national parks has grown twice as fast as urban areas. The land set aside for these purposes is now three times as large as urban areas. And for all the rhetoric about "vanishing farmland," the amount of farmland isn't declining significantly. The rate of farmland loss—which is driven more by falling commodity prices than by development pressures—is actually lower today than in the 1960s and '70s.

Yet these facts have little to do with the politics of sprawl. No one in a fast-growing area is likely to be moved by aggregate land-use statistics. If some of that .0006 percent of land development is taking place in your community, it's a big deal. And the favorite solutions of free-market policy wonks, such as charging drivers for using their cars during hours of high congestion, privatizing infrastructure like sewers, and zoning that respects property rights, are unlikely to appeal to voters. As between a candidate talking up "livability" and "quality of life" and one speaking about road pricing, there is no contest. In this respect, Gore's anti-sprawl crusade can be seen as adapting a kind of conservative nostalgia—for communities untouched by the changes that development inevitably brings—to advance liberal ends.

Indeed, a number of Republicans, and even some conservatives, have embraced much of this agenda. New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman tried to raise gas taxes to purchase open spaces and, when that failed, successfully sponsored a bond issue for the same purpose. Utah governor Mike Leavitt is a believer in smart growth, and Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge two years ago appointed a "21st Century Environment Commission" that has become obsessed with sprawl.

PLAN OBSOLESCENCE

There is just enough truth in the "smart growth" critique of contemporary urban life to make a direct attack on the Gore agenda difficult. Many American cities and suburbs *are* a mess. This was foretold in Jane Jacobs's 1961 classic, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, an attack on the "urban renewal" being led by the planners of the day. Urban renewal in those days consisted of bulldozing entire neighborhoods so that they could be replaced with strictly separate land uses that were thought to be more "rational." The bigger the area "renewed," the bigger the disaster, the apotheosis being Brasilia in South America, which sprang full-blown from the minds of the best planners of the day and resulted in perhaps the ugliest and most dysfunctional city in the world.

Jacobs's point was that truly livable cities evolve spontaneously, and that prescriptive planning stifles this process and upsets the urban order. She was especially critical of the proscriptions against mixed-use and high-density development that formed part of the conventional wisdom among planners at the time. Today's smart-growth advocates hold Jacobs up as their guru because of her praise of density and mixed-use development, but totally miss her main point about the limitations of planning and the spontaneous nature of city life. Here we have the beginnings of a possibly effective counterattack on "smart growth": Why should we let the government and the planners who failed so badly at urban renewal try their hand at suburban renewal?

THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY RAIL

The new plans work just as poorly as the old. People never fit the planners' mold. Light rail, for instance, which together with high-density development is supposed to reduce congestion, has been a flop. In his Brookings speech in September, Gore incredibly claimed that the light-rail system in Portland, Oregon (the Potemkin village of the smart-growth movement), was attracting 40 percent of daily commuters. The actual number is less than 4 percent on a good day; that Gore was completely credulous about this fantastic figure, and that no one challenged him on his blooper, is telling. There is no reason that we should be looking to a 19th-century technology to meet 21st-century mobility needs.

Nor does high-density development reduce congestion. The superficially appealing idea is that if we all live closer to where we work and shop, shorter car trips and mass transit will replace all those long car rides. But the real world doesn't work that way. Try this thought experiment: What happens at a cocktail party when a new wave of people shows up and the population density of the living room doubles? Is it harder or easier to get to the bar and the cheese tray? Is it harder or easier to carry on conversation and move around the room? As urban population density rises, auto-traffic congestion gets *worse*, not better, and commute times get *longer*, not shorter.

There is no reason that we should be looking to a 19th-century technology to meet 21st-century needs.

If density and proximity to transit cured congestion, then walkable, transit-rich New York City would have the best mobility and least congestion of any American city. In fact, while the average home-to-work commute in American cities is about 22 minutes, the average home-to-work commute for New Yorkers is 36 minutes, according to U.S. Census data, one-third longer than the average. No other city, not even Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, or Philadelphia, comes close. "Sprawling" low-density cities like Phoenix and Albuquerque, meanwhile, have commute times below the national average. So why would anyone want to embrace a "solution" that will make the problem of congestion worse?

The answer is readily apparent: to get us out of our cars. It is no exaggeration to say that for most smart-growth advocates, the car is a rolling cigarette, and General Motors is the moral equivalent of Philip Morris. In *Earth in the Balance*, of course, Gore wrote that the internal combustion engine "is posing a mortal threat to the security of every nation that is more deadly than that of any military enemy we are ever likely to confront again." It is this animus toward the car that explains why the smart-growth crowd is fixated on high-density development.

The planners want to increase congestion *deliberately*, to

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MYTH: Marijuana is a gateway drug.

FACT: For every 104 people who have used marijuana, there is only one regular user of cocaine and less than one heroin addict. (1)

MYTH: Marijuana is addictive.

FACT: Less than one percent of people who consume marijuana do so on a daily or near daily basis. An even smaller minority develop dependence on marijuana. Withdrawal symptoms, if experienced at all, are mild. (2)

MYTH: Marijuana lowers motivation.

FACT: For twenty five years, researchers have searched for a marijuana-induced amotivational syndrome and have failed to find it. Of course, people who are constantly intoxicated, no matter what the drug, are not likely to be productive. (3)

MYTH: Higher concentrations of THC make marijuana more dangerous.

FACT: There is no possibility of fatal overdose from smoking marijuana, regardless of potency. High potency marijuana may be less harmful to the lungs because people can use less to achieve the desired effects. (4)

MYTH: Marijuana causes brain damage.

FACT: No medical test used to determine brain damage has indicated brain damage in humans who use marijuana — even after long-term use. (5)

So, why did we arrest 642,000 Americans last year for marijuana offenses?

SOURCES: **(1)** Department of HHS, *National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*, 1997. **(2)** Department of HHS, *National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*, 1997; Jones, r.t. et al, "Clinical Relevance of Cannabis Tolerance and Dependence," *Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* 21:143-526 (1981). **(3)** Pope, H.G. et al, "Drug Use and Life Style Among College Undergraduates in 1989: A Comparison With 1969 and 1978,: *American Journal of Psychiatry* 147:998-001 (1990); Kandel, D. et al, "The Impact of Drug Use on Earnings: A Life-Span Perspective," *Social Forces* 74:243-270 (1995). **(4)** Department of Health and Human Services, "Marijuana and the Cannabinoids," pp., 131-44 in *Drug Abuse and Drug Abuse Research*, Third Triennial Report to Congress from the Secretary (1991). **(5)** Hannerz, J. and Hindmarsh, T. "Neurological and Neuroradiological Examination of Chronic Cannabis Smokers," Annals of Neurology 13:207-10 (1983); Stuve, F.A. and Straumania, J.J., "Electroencephalographic and Evoked Potential Methods in Human Marijuana Research Historical Review and Future Trends," *Drug Development Research* 20: 369-88 (1990).

A complete discussion of the effects of marijuana is available from *Marijuana Myths / Marijuana Facts: A Review of the Scientific Evidence* by Lynn Zimmer, Ph.D. and John Morgan, M.D. available from Bookworld Services 1-800-444-2524.

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force us out of our cars and onto light rail. National Public Radio noted in a report that "Portland's planners are embracing congestion; they want to create more of it." Portland's 40-year plan restricts road-building and envisions congestion tripling. The smart-growth coalition in Utah has produced a 25-year plan that predicts a 10 percent increase in congestion over what would otherwise be expected.

Behind the contempt for the car is contempt for the communities and ways of life it makes possible. Elite distaste for suburban life is an old liberal theme. Herbert Gans wrote his famous book *The Levittowners* 30 years ago to defend suburbanites from the charge that they were "an uneducated, gullible, petty 'mass' which rejects the culture that would make it fully human, the 'good government' that would create the better community, and the proper planning that would do away with the landscape-despoiling little 'boxes' in which they live."

Those attitudes persist to this day. They are present in a recent report of the Pennsylvania commission appointed by

Behind the contempt for the car is contempt for the communities and the ways of life it makes possible.

Gov. Ridge. Identifying urban sprawl as the single most important environmental problem in the Keystone state, the report declared, "We must find ways to prompt individual Pennsylvanians to explore their personal lifestyle choices—where they choose to live and work, how and how much they travel each day, how much energy they consume or save, and consider changes in those patterns that will not only improve the long-term quality of their lives but also contribute to a better quality of life for all citizens of the Commonwealth."

In other words, commuting suburbanites are making unenlightened lifestyle choices because they lack the expert supervision that only their betters in government can provide. And this is the product of a *Republican* administration.

Gore can be expected to be a lot more careful with his rhetoric about suburban life as he gears up for 2000, and his remedies will be described in the most benign way. He knows that a direct attack on cars won't work and that the imposition of urban-growth boundaries making certain areas off limits to development can proceed only by stealth. (Watch for the new land-conservation program to establish de facto urban-growth boundaries by having localities lock up key parcels of land on the urban periphery to choke off growth, and for the EPA to start monitoring more closely local zoning-board decisions.) That's why smoking Gore out will require skill and finesse. Conservatives need to revive the populist language about centralized government and liberal elitism that worked so well in the past. The same government that brought you urban renewal, conservatives should say, is likely to make an even worse mess of suburban renewal. **NR**

The Vital Middle

Three cheers for the middle class.

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

My reaction on reading the vice president's January 11 press release ("Building Livable Communities for the 21st Century") was: I shall give up my lawn mower when they prise it from my cold dead fingers.

I confess I did not get more than halfway through the thing: Two full pages of unrelieved Fedsperanto is more than anyone should be asked to take on a full stomach. "Coordinated reinvestment in existing infrastructure" . . . "alternative transportation" . . . "fostering" . . . "nurturing" . . . The gist of it, through all the wretched driveling cant of bureaucratized "compassion"—Ella Wheeler Wilcox meets V. I. Lenin—was clear enough, though. The Government People want to take over my suburb. They want me to apply for an Endangered Species Act waiver before I kill a garden slug. They want me to pay twelve dollars for a screwdriver at some poky Commerce Department-approved Mom 'n' Pop store, instead of four dollars at my beloved Home Depot. They want me to ride a bus.

This I take personally. I spent a long time getting to my sixth of an acre of suburbia. Raised in a public-housing project on the edge of an English country town, I was 18 before I even saw a suburb. That was Ealing in west London, where I had lodgings in my student days. It was an hour's commute from my college—lodgings are scarce in London, and you have to take what you can get. Other than my landlady, I knew nobody there at all. With no money and no acquaintances, my main recreation was walking the quiet, leafy streets, exploring the small parks and shopping areas, wondering at the spacious tranquility of it all. Ealing has stayed in my mind as the *Ur*-suburb, the Eden from which I was exiled for many years to take up a rootless and entirely non-suburban life in foreign parts.

Ealing was, as it happens, celebrated by the great poet of English suburbia, John Betjeman. I do not think Betjeman is much read over here; and this state of affairs is probably irremediable, as he is a very English writer, intimately attentive to England's speech, society, and landscape. (The standard edition of Betjeman's *Collected Poems* contains an index of place-names five full pages long.) When a fellow poet who had taken himself off to the countryside in search of peace complained about the distractions of country life—motorbikes, farm machinery, low-flying planes—Betjeman penned a sweetly ironic poem beginning:

Return, return to Ealing,
Worn poet of the farm!
Regain your boyhood feeling
Of uninvaded calm!

Mr. Derbyshire is a contributing editor of NATIONAL REVIEW.

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Betjeman's suburbs were upper middle class: mock-Tudor mansions at the end of graveled driveways lined with rhododendron and euonymus. I am not sure how he would have reacted to the democratization of suburbia, a process now more or less complete, at least in the U.S. Reading down my own Long Island street, which is as suburban as you please, I find: a radio announcer, the widow of an aircraft engineer, a journeyman printer, a small-company executive, a fellow who lays floors (he did an excellent job on our kitchen), a schoolteacher, a self-employed landscaper, a research scientist . . . The median here is upper-lower-middle class, family incomes I suppose in the highish five figures. The path of evolution from Betjeman's stockbrokers and retired colonels has been continuous, though, and the fundamental quality he identified—"uninvaded calm"—has remained invariant.

"Uninvaded calm"! For the first four years of our marriage, my wife and I lived in a studio apartment on Manhattan's East 46th Street, a location so central that our post office was the one in Grand Central Station. While never actually invaded—our doors sported the usual array of chains, peepholes, and quadruple mortice bolts—we did have homeless people camped on the stoop late at night; and a very senior mafioso was rather abruptly "retired" one evening coming out of Sparks Steak House a few doors down. The only real calm we enjoyed was in the early morning hours, when the monstrous extractor fans of the restaurants on the first floor below us were shut off. Though mighty convenient, the place was desperately small; my wife used to say that if she wanted to put anything down, she had to pick up something else first. After looking at the prospects of raising children in Manhattan on a modest income, we moved to the suburbs.

I asked my wife—who, previous to joining me in East 46th Street, had lived all her life in mainland China, in barracks and apartment blocks—to compare her impressions of city and suburban living here in America. After a few moments' thought, she expressed herself in one of those clipped antitheses that come naturally to the Chinese language, but translate so clumsily: "In the city, physical distance between people is small, social distance large. Out here, the physical distance is larger, the social distance much less."

That has been our experience, however much at variance with the *Sesame Street* mythology of close-knit city neighborhoods and with the contrapuntal theme of suburban anomie propagated by novelists of the Cheever-Updike school and movies like *The Graduate* and *The Ice Storm*. For us, as for millions of ordinary Americans, suburban life is the height of felicity, not to be improved by the vice president and his harebrained "initiatives." To adapt the defiant speech of Elizabeth the First at the approach of the Spanish Armada: We think foul scorn that Clinton or Gore, or any prince of Washington, should dare to invade the borders of our realm. **NR**

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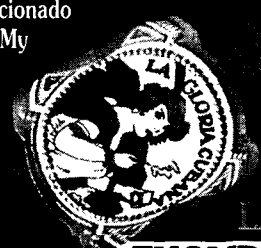

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Strip Show

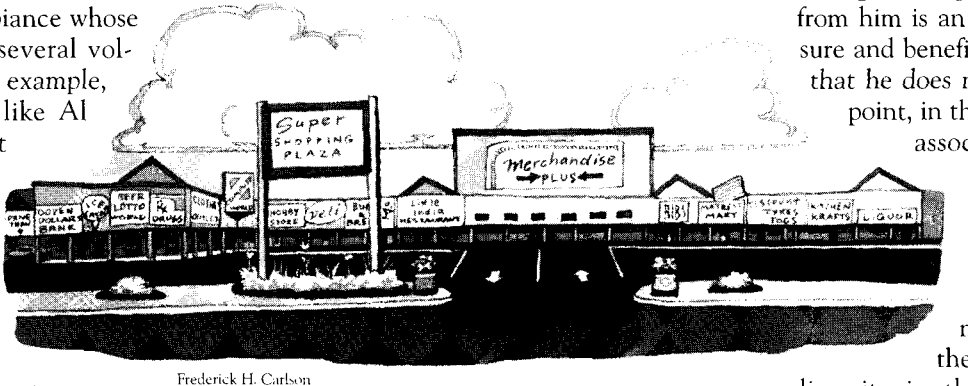
In praise of suburban schlock.

DAVID SHIFLETT

VICE PRESIDENT Al Gore's attempt to freeze suburban growth is no surprise to those of us who live here in the Great Beyond. Suburbs contain many people who not only believe Gore is a sanctimonious and lachrymose stiff, but who vote that way as well. The fewer 'burbs the better for Al, who, it should be noted, hopes to build support for his plan by playing on anti-suburban prejudices.

Like hatchery trout, people raised in hotels can be forgiven the blandness of their demeanor and cognitive skills, but the cause of truth requires that these prejudices be dispelled. None is more pernicious than the assertion that the strip shopping center is a canker on the bosom of that grand abstraction known as Mother Nature.

The opposite is true. Strip malls are vastly preferable to any other type of shopping venue, combining the Clintonian virtues of quick entry and exit ("It all happened so fast," notes a recent accuser) with a Spartan ambiance whose benefits could fill several volumes. It is odd, for example, that sophisticates like Al haven't noticed that strip malls abjure the fake plants, fake waterfalls, and fake music common at urban department stores and enclosed malls, preferring no plants, no waterfalls, no music of any type, save for the ringing of cash registers. Nor is one likely to encounter a retailer-deployed Santa Claus or Easter Bunny at a stripper, unless those beloved figures happen to be dropping by for a pack of cigarettes or a dose of malt liquor. This adds up to a certain purity unknown at other shopping venues, especially urban department stores. And purity is our goal, is it not?



Frederick H. Carlson

This is not to argue that strip malls are without problems. Some attract ill-mannered adolescents, though the enclosed malls seem to be their preferred destination. In any event, the barren nature of strip-mall architecture makes it easy to flush and scatter this malevolent herd. Indeed, what a thrill it gives to watch the police rout a pack of these jackals. Similarly, merchants routinely keep shotguns and pistols on hand with which they administer quick and appropriate justice: Many more criminals have had a career-ending experience at a stripper than at a city department store, which is also a good thing.

Aesthetics aside, strip malls are home to a large number of taverns, which is probably the foremost reason the vice president and his killjoy friends despise them. Drinkers of a serious stripe prefer stripper barrooms to the urban variety, largely because they are smokier, noisier, and offer a freer sense of the soul. (This is not speculation, but the result of many years of field work.)

Experience teaches that patrons of upscale city bars behave much like congregants at high-end churches, taking on the institution's airs, which tend to be conventional and restrained. In contrast, the unpretentious strip-mall bar, like a storefront tabernacle, takes on the characteristics of its patrons, who tend to be Pentecostal in their exuberance. Accordingly, while the upscale patron takes pride in holding his liquor, the strip-mall guzzler doesn't want to hold his at all, but instead toss it down the hatch as quickly as possible. The resulting fistfights are vastly more entertaining than listening to dapper drones go on about the stock market. Drinking also tends to be cheaper at the stripper.

Another anti-suburban prejudice popular with Al's crowd holds that suburbs are "sterile" and "homogenized." The vice president, himself a barrel of virility and sparkle, no doubt regularly encountered people of diverse backgrounds while growing up, especially at room-service time or when the staff came in to make the beds. Ergo, taking moral instruction from him is an undisputed pleasure and benefit. And the fact is that he does make a legitimate point, in that people tend to associate with others of similar income level, wherever they happen to live. Within that social arrangement, however, there is tremendous diversity in the 'burbs, as my experiences both Beyond Washington and Beyond Denver have proven.

Closely allied with the homogeneity prejudice is the assertion that suburban dwellers are not quite so intellectually rigorous or artistically accomplished as their urban cousins. One wishes that were so, for that would mean much better art, movies, plays, and television than the dreck currently flowing from urban culture factories. The sad truth is that even the most dynamic urbanite rarely creates anything more valuable than a couple of bags of trash each week (which they pay rural folk to bury).

Indeed, the urban culture's brightest minds have clearly been taken captive by their gonads, to a comic degree. Our household was recently amused by an ad in the *New York Times* (home delivered) for a book promising insights into Helen Keller's sex life. The word obsession means different things to different people, but an interest in the sex life of a

Mr. Shiflett lives beyond Richmond, Virginia.

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woman who was blind, deaf, dumb, and none too attractive probably fits most descriptions.

Here in the Great Beyond we of course have bigger things to think about, such as football, hunting, and the latest line of Toro yard-maintenance machines. We are not deluded, however, into thinking any of this is really important, which is another difference between the urban intellectual sophisticate (or pointy-head, as one famous rustic admirably noted) and the typical suburbanite. The former takes his opinions about Helen Keller's sex life, and indeed himself, much too seriously, not understanding that in doing so he has made a profound philosophical miscalculation. He would be much better off pursuing other urban interests, such as putting his ear against his apartment wall to listen to his neighbor shave her legs.

As for Al and his grasping confederates, we know what they're really up to. They are targeting the 'burbs because they recognize that suburbanites, with their detached houses, little plots of land, and septic tanks, are freer than people who dwell in tall cement boxes. Suburbanites aren't fully in harness—not likely to swoon at the feet of Al or even supposed right-wingers like Iron Rudolph Giuliani, who steals the cars of drivers who had an extra beer at the pizza parlor.

Al says all he wants to do is promote open space and protect Mother Nature, who has recently repaid his loyalty by unleashing an unprecedented number of tornadoes on his "native" Tennessee. But we have a saying out here about people like Al: They'll steal your chaw of tobacco if you so much as yawn. His photograph has been forwarded to the Neighborhood Watch committee. **NR**

Public Judgment

Is it time to give up on the American people?

RAMESH PONNURU

WHO says conservatives lack self-confidence? Having impeached Bill Clinton, they have moved on to their next ambition: impeaching the entire country. So, at least, one might conclude from listening to some of the conservative lamentations about the American public's failure to demand Clinton's head on a pike. Where were the peasants, where the pitchforks?

Many conservatives have seized on the least charitable explanation: Seduced by good fortune and sunk in sexual immorality, the public just doesn't care about what Clinton did. "The hard truth is that many Americans are not merely tolerating Mr. Clinton; they are embracing him," Bill Bennett concludes in the *Wall Street Journal*. "The president has higher approval ratings and is more admired today than before the Lewinsky scandal broke." In *The Weekly Standard*, John DiIulio decries the "creeping paganization" of America. Andrea Sheldon, executive director of the Traditional Values

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Coalition, tells the *Washington Post*, "The American people are really messed up." In a widely publicized letter, veteran activist Paul Weyrich suggests that it might be time for conservatives to abandon politics and "drop out of this culture": "I no longer believe that there is a moral majority."

Weyrich is known for threatening every few months to leave the Republican party; his frustration now is no surprise. But there is no doubt that his mood is shared by millions of conservatives. And there is no ducking the fact that conservatives took the unpopular side of the impeachment fight. One of the dividends of impeachment—and there were a few—was, as James W. Ceaser has written in the *Standard*, to remind conservatives that their movement is constitutionalist before it is populist. But for that movement to give up on or condemn the public would be as unwarranted as it is suicidal.

In the first place, the despairing conservatives are misreading the public's attitude toward the scandal. This is not merely "wishful assertion," as Bennett fears. While Clinton's job-approval numbers have been strong, his *personal* approval ratings have plummeted to 32 percent. More Americans are "ashamed" than "proud" that he is president. They don't want their sons to grow up like him and don't want him near their daughters. This is not the sort of "embrace" one sees on a dance floor. The public now accepts that Clinton is a lout and a lawbreaker; indeed, that he committed impeachable offenses.

If the public failed to draw the conclusion that he should be removed from office, this was mostly for reasons not attributable to moral decline. A recent Gallup poll suggests that only 18 percent of the public actually hold the belief, so often attributed to it, that Clinton's failings don't matter because his policies have succeeded. (An equally small group accepted Clinton's "apologies" and believed he would not repeat his offenses; and another 26 percent are simply hard-core partisans who claim that Clinton has *raised* the stature of the presidency.)

In any case, it is understandable that economic conditions would affect people's attitudes toward the president; that was true in the case of Richard Nixon as well. And the reluctance to dump a president during a boom is hard to separate from a laudable, and conservative, concern for political stability. Granted, this was overstated: You would think from some of those man-on-the-street interviews that the world economy would grind to a halt if Clinton weren't—what? Adjusting the controls? But the public's initial reaction to the scandal in particular was quite healthy: Americans weren't going to discard a president just because Sam and Cokie thought they should.

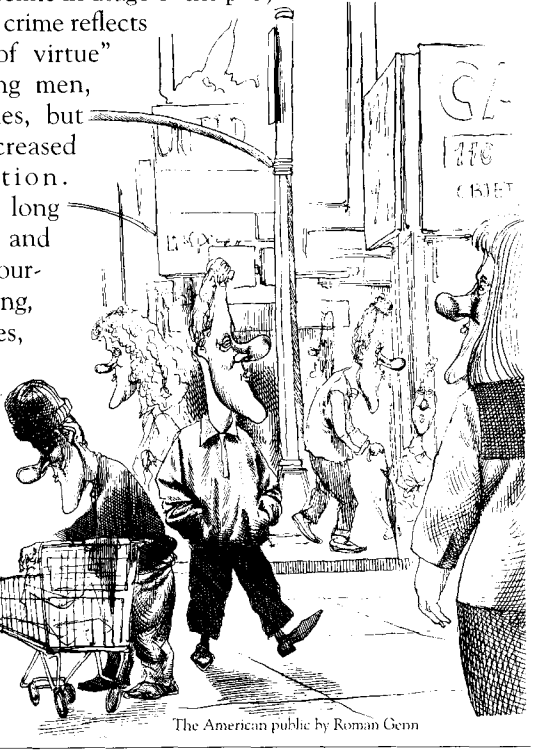
Which brings us to another explanation for the public's attitude: revulsion toward the mainstream media. Conservatives can't argue with that. Nor can they object to the public's sense of fair play, respect for privacy, and distaste for explicit sexual discussions on TV, all of which also helped Clinton. Part of Clinton's malignity is his manipulation of these decent sentiments in behalf of his own indecencies. There's even reason to think that discomfort with the prospect of a Gore presidency influenced public opinion; that ought to cheer conservatives too.

Some of the reasons Clinton walked were not so benign. The lazy, false, and popular refrain, "They all do it," was a piece of pseudo-sophisticated cynicism used to justify turning away from public responsibility altogether. But conservatives are in no position to scold the public about this attitude, since, as Bennett has observed, they have themselves encouraged it for a generation. The withdrawal from public life with which Weyrich is flirting is not a constructive response to that approach to politics; it *is* that approach to politics. Conservatives might also reflect that the wild allegations of some conservatives, unrepudiated by others, inoculated the public against real Clinton wrongdoings.

For all these reasons, the public opposed Clinton's removal as a radical step. It was not so much that Americans opposed removal because they supported Clinton so strongly. Rather, they supported Clinton so strongly because they opposed removal. That's the simplest way of explaining why his job-approval ratings shot up every time the danger to Clinton appeared to increase.

And if people are pleased with the state of the union, why shouldn't they be? After three decades of inflation, superpower rivalry, recession, and rising crime and welfare rolls, Americans are entitled to a little celebrating. Conservatives were beginning to complain about the public even before the Lewinsky affair, when a plurality of voters disappointed them by re-electing Clinton. They were supposed to reject him in 1996, one of the best years in American history, even though no credible alternative had been presented.

It is a mark of conservatives' unconservative alienation from society that, rather than enjoy good times, they carp and complain. What good are lower crime and abortion rates, asks Judge Bork in *The American Enterprise*, if kids still listen to rap and President Clinton is still in power? In an account of the country's moral condition in *The American Spectator*, Brian A. Brown ignores the dramatic recent declines in teenage sexual activity—according to the CDC, self-reported virgins are now a slight majority of high-school boys—instead attributing the fall in teen pregnancies to an increase in contraception. (The AIDS-driven condom campaign has in fact been more than offset by a decline in usage of the pill.)


The fall in crime reflects no "wave of virtue" among young men, Brown argues, but only increased incarceration. Think too long this way, and you'll find yourself grumbling, as he does, that welfare rolls are down only because . . . recipients were forced to work! But conservatives are supposed to believe
The American public by Roman Genn

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that social pressure should encourage virtuous behavior and that this behavior changes character through habituation.

No conservative can deny that Americans are still afflicted by too much moral confusion and social disorder. Crime is still too high; illegitimacy ratios have merely begun to level off, and at a disastrous level. Too many children spend too much time in the care of strangers. And there is no denying, either, that an America less damaged by the sexual revolution would probably have had the moral confidence to judge Clinton more severely. But this is to pinpoint today's problem: that Americans are losing their capacity for authoritative moral judgment, which does not mean that they are becoming immoral in their conduct. The statistics on Americans' behavior suggest that the culture is slowly beginning to learn from its mistakes.

The fact that America's recent prosperity has coincided with improvements on the social front refutes the notion that wealth is corrupting the country. Or is prosperity per se a bad thing? There have been increasing murmurs on the social right to that effect. The suspicion of wealth pops up in all sorts of weird ways: Richard John Neuhaus, who generally knows better, recently mused in *First Things* that maybe Republicans' disastrous slippage in the last elections among well-off voters isn't such a bad thing because the GOP is becoming "the party of the common man."

Consider, though, how the investing class has grown during this fantastic stock-market boom. It could not have happened unless millions of Americans had worked hard; deferred immediate gratification by saving; avoided dissolute behavior; and made long-term plans for their families' future and stuck to them. They have, in short, cultivated the bourgeois virtues. These aren't the only virtues or even the highest. But it's hard to imagine conservatives prospering if Americans turned their backs on these virtues—or if they themselves did.

Perhaps the Right's ill humor has less to do with middle-class morals than middle-class politics anyway. While some conservatives console themselves with the thought that the ship of state continues to drift rightward—the result of the momentum built up over the last three decades—they sense that, with Clinton's success, the ship is slowly beginning to set a course to the left. But this should be depressing only to conservatives who believed they were destined to win easy victories without ever suffering setbacks.

There is one last reason conservatives cannot lecture the American people as their betters: They are immune to none of the country's social ills. Anyone who's spent any time in the movement is familiar with the Christian activist who abandons her children to day care for twelve hours at a stretch; the conservative politician who ditches the wife who helped him rise to power for a younger woman who will help him enjoy it; the think tanker who writes earnest papers during the week that are belied by the squalor of his conduct on the weekend. As John O'Sullivan has remarked, you can't have a cultural decline that affects only your opponents. This is one reason that it would be fatal for social conservatives to frame the "culture war" as a struggle between the good people and the bad people.

That would be a posture of spectacular arrogance. Americans won't, and shouldn't, stand for it. Conservatives are entitled—are required—to insist that a large majority of the public got impeachment wrong. A movement that wants to govern a country must occasionally argue with the public. It can't argue against it. **NR**

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Anxiety in Steel Country

A mill town trembles and waits.

JAY NORDLINGER

Weirton, West Virginia

POLITICIANS like to come here to make a point. They go to the Millsop Community Center, between the library and the Presbyterian church. John Kennedy spoke there in 1960, having discovered that not every American summers on Cape Cod. Bill Clinton spoke there in 1992, on the first stop of his now-legendary bus tour. And Pat Buchanan spoke there on March 1, in effect launching his 2000 presidential campaign. To each candidate, townspeople—most of them steelworkers and their families—gave a tumultuous ovation.

Few here, though, are cheering for Clinton now. This solidly Democratic town is ripe for the Republican Buchanan and his "economic nationalism," as the steel industry is reeling from a recent surge in "dumped" imports. At Weirton Steel, the town's dominant employer, nearly 1,000 workers have been laid off since November, and the company has lost millions of dollars. Buchanan thinks he knows whom to blame, and so do most Weirtonians: foreign countries that "dump" steel into the U.S. market, and the administration that refuses to stand up to them, in the name of the "global economy."

In Buchanan's distinctive rhetoric, "the people of Weirton are looking down the barrel of a gun." Yet "the global economy's apologists in Washington don't like to talk about the Weirtons of America," preferring to believe that "all Americans are floating on a wave of Wall Street prosperity." The local union leader, Mark Glyptis, in a similar vein, never tires of saying that "Wall Street"—particularly as represented by Treasury secretary Robert Rubin—"is forgetting about Main Street." If Clinton or his heir apparent, Al Gore, ever tries to return to Weirton, he says, "I'll run him out of town."

When Clinton did his JFK act in 1992, he told Weirton that, as president, he would "strictly enforce" laws that forbid the "dumping" of "unfair, subsidized steel." If foreign governments "are doing things for their steel that we're not doing for ours," he said, "they shouldn't have access to our market." His remarks, captured on videotape, are very familiar in the Ohio Valley, played again and again on television. Gore can be seen nodding solemnly. At a recent meeting, Weirton Steel president Richard Riederer handed Clinton a copy of the infamous tape—just as a reminder.

Weirton, a town of 22,000, is aflame with anger, resentment, and bewilderment. Mainly, people are afraid. You can sense fear in the eyes and conversation of almost everyone you meet. "I hear they're laying off another 500," says one man to another. "They're saying something about 25 years" (referring to a worker's seniority). Weirtonians whisper such rumors as though talking about some dread disease, which could sooner or later consume the entire population. They hope they will be able to ride out yet another downturn in a notoriously cyclical business, but, deep down, they worry that the end is really coming for them.

Their fury at Clinton—for whom practically everyone voted, twice—is startling. The more rattled ones say that betrayal must run in his blood. Laid-off workers—many of whom are Vietnam veterans—are quick to remind you that Clinton dodged the draft, failing his country then, failing it now. "Tell those idiots in Washington," says one, "that America is going to be a Third World country, with no industrial base. There's going to be no middle class—just the rich and the poor. They say they're 'free traders,' but they're really 'free traitors': T-R-A-I-T-O-R-S."

Not only are people here incensed at Clinton, they are dismayed at their fellow Americans, whom they consider unpatriotic for ignoring their plight. "What's really killing us," says union official Dave Gossett, "is that the American people are tolerating this. They are apparently willing to let the industry just go and die." The mayor, Dean Harris (who is also a mill worker), says that nothing less than "the American Dream is being taken from us. We thought that if we worked hard, we'd attain that dream, and now we're losing it. The strange thing is, everyone else is flourishing."

In Weirton, the company and the people are one. Nestled in the northern panhandle of the state, 35 miles from Pittsburgh, this has been a steel town since the early part of the century, when E. T. Weir founded his mill. Generations of Weirtonians—chiefly of Italian and East European ancestry—have committed their sweat to the company, establishing a way of life that once seemed as permanent as the Ohio River. A young person may have desired to escape the mill, but it was there for him if he needed it, and it provided a dignified living.

By the early 1980s, however, the company had become bloated and inefficient, unable to compete in a more aggressive market. It then "went E.S.O.P.," adopting an Employee

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Stock Ownership Plan that allowed it to survive, if in "leaner and meaner" form. The workforce dropped from a high of 13,000 to about 4,600 today (including those laid off). The reduction took place "gentle-like," as one worker explains, primarily through retirement, with little further hiring. Ten years ago—here is the measure of efficiency in the industry—it took 6.5 "man-hours" to produce a ton of steel. Now, it takes a mere 1.2.

Even so, the company was knocked on its back last November when Russia, Brazil, and Japan flooded the U.S. market with below-cost steel, rendering Weirton's product hopelessly overpriced. The community, in mortal danger, rallied to "Stand Up for Steel," as every sign in the Valley proclaims. On January 20, in the dead of night, 75 buses pulled out of Weirton, carrying what seemed like the whole town to Washington for a march. The new militants strode from the Capitol to the White House, where Rep. Bob Ney—who represents the neighboring Ohio district—stormed the gates, guerrilla-like.

"We're not leaving until someone comes out and listens to us!" he shouted at the guards. Eventually, an aide from the legislative-affairs office emerged, and the demonstrators rode back to Weirton, exhausted but satisfied that they had delivered a message.

Indeed, they had. In February, the Commerce Department imposed or negotiated restrictions on a sizable portion of foreign steel. The administration had already offered U.S. companies a tax break and other "trade-adjustment" relief. Still, the industry and its advocates are unappeased. Mark Glyptis charges that the administration is planning for the "death" of domestic steel, not its recovery. "The Ohio Valley," he promises, "will not be turned into a hospice." Ney, too, insists that "we're not going to be bought off." He is white-hot about the issue, like every other pol in Steel Country. Several bills, proposing varying degrees of protection, are now circulating in Congress.

The dilemma, according to the steel caucus, is not the classic one of free trade versus protectionism. Oh no. Rather, it is a matter of enforcing "anti-dumping" laws that now rust on the books. "We can compete with anybody in the world," goes the refrain, "but only if we have a fair shot. We ask for no favors." Dean Harris says that even if Weirton Steel had no payroll at all—if the company paid its workers zero—it would *still* be helpless against "illegal foreign steel." As Dick Riederer puts it, "They can't put us out of business legally. But they can do it *illegally*."

Not long ago, Riederer plunked down in front of Gore a picture from a newspaper, showing a Russian steelworker on the job. "Do you see that, Mr. Vice President?" he said. "We haven't made steel by that method in years. That's how our grandfathers used to do it. It is laughably inefficient and expensive and uncompetitive. Yet they're destroying us, through dumping."

Most strikingly, there is a pervasive sense here that "our fate is out of our hands." It is a phrase you hear from everyone, from Riederer to the humblest wage earner. "We did everything we were asked to do," people say. "We downsized, we modernized, we made sacrifices. But none of that matters. It's still not good enough. What do we do now? Who can tell us?"

Harris knows that further change is coming, and he is urging his fellow citizens to prepare for it. In his State of the City address before the local Rotary chapter, he says, "We can't

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afford any longer to be a one-horse town. We have to find some other horses to ride, if we're going to stay in the race." Dave Gossett says that he cannot in good conscience encourage teenagers to follow their parents and grandparents into the mill. Riederer, like everyone else, stresses education, saying that "we have to take the young ones and show them more of life."

And yet, many in Weirton view the mill as something close to their birthright, the place of their destiny, for good or ill.

■

'It was all so reassuring,' she says. 'The mill was the center of our world. It meant everything. Nothing could disturb it.'

■

Gossett sighs that "this is a family company in a family-oriented town." One woman remembers sitting in her grandfather's yard as a girl, looking at the mill, watching as the cranes bent and rose, and the furnaces belched and spewed. "It was all so reassuring," she says. "The mill was the center of our world. It meant everything. Nothing could disturb it." Riederer notes that it is an abiding sense of entitlement—the mill as mother's milk—that Weirton, step by step, will have to overcome.

Speaking for many, Gossett laments that there is no "solidarity" anymore in the country, certainly not among unions. Steelworkers remember the "Buy American" campaign in the auto industry, when laid-off assemblymen took sledgehammers to Hondas. Now, the United Auto Workers—who build cars profitably with "dumped" steel—seem indifferent to their steelworking brethren. When Weirton steelworkers asked UAW members at a nearby GM plant to join them in a rally, they were met with an embarrassed silence.

Gossett, like others, is especially concerned for middle-aged workers, who (in a local expression) only "know mill." The current situation is "terrifying" for them, he says. "I've worked with these people for years, and I have no idea what to say to them. I look at them, and they're scared. I want to do something for them—have them mow my lawn for ten dollars, whatever—but I have a wife and children of my own." Harris and Riederer, too, have trouble knowing what to say. They can hardly bear to walk down the street or into a store anymore, besieged as they are by shaken workers.

The specter of social breakdown hangs in the air. Judy Raveaux, in typical Weirton fashion, remembers the precise date on which her husband was laid off in the early '80s. (He is laid off once more.) She and their children moved in with her parents. He went to North Carolina, where he found a job in a cookie factory. She cleaned bars in the middle of the night, often taking her sleeping children with her. After two and a half years, the mill beckoned her husband back to work. Of all the couples they knew in that period, they are the only pair who managed to stay married. Alcoholism, debauchery, and despair—those unlovely attendants on joblessness—took their toll. "I feel sorry for the Russians," she says, along with everyone else, "but . . . "

As mayor, Harris does his best to cheer the troops. As hourly laborer, he too frets for his family. He has so far retained his mill job—the mayor's position pays a pittance—but he has been laid off four times in the past. He is able to tell audiences, "The president says he can feel your pain, but I have *actually felt* it." When he reflects on the prospects for those tossed out in middle age, his eyes fill with tears, and he is forced to turn away. Some will land on their feet, sure, but others are ill equipped to "roll with the punches" and "start over from scratch." Weirton is not like a traveling circus, which, facing lean times, can fold its tent and move in a caravan to the next town. There are . . . complications.

Obviously, the siren song of Buchananism is deafening here. Die-hard Democrats are ready to pull the lever for a populist Republican who will pin their woes on a foreign menace and the callous neglect of Big Money. The question—quite legitimate—for the rest of the country is, Should Americans in general care whether the steel industry lives or dies? There are only about 160,000 steelworkers left in the country, a relatively tiny number. (They could all fit into one and a half Rose Bowls.) The national economy is climbing through the roof, thanks to the global economy so hated in Weirton. Free traders can only shake their heads at the wildly disproportionate political clout the steel industry wields. James K. Glassman, the writer and analyst, points out that there is a certain romanticism about steel, a feeling that, somehow, the production of that metal makes a country "serious."

Brink Lindsey of the Cato Institute observes that the steelworkers are like the farmers, another dwindling band. They reside in the popular imagination as the salt of the earth, connecting America to its glorious, nation-building past. While the forces of both groups have become meager, their political lobbies remain strong, skewing the proper order of things. The domestic oil industry is hurting too, notes Lindsey, but nobody—least of all factions in Congress—is squawking about slapping tariffs on foreign oil. The availability of cheaper commodities has indisputably been a boon to the overall economy. Adam Smith, cars-killed-horse-buggies, et cetera, et cetera.

And yet and yet. The logic of the market is wise to hold its tongue in Weirton, where the question nags, "But what about the people?" Bob Rubin is demonized here because he makes (perfectly truthful) statements like, "We have larger concerns than the steel industry." In Weirton, however, as Dean Harris emphasizes, there *is* no larger concern than how to hold body and soul together. Dick Riederer, who is utterly without illusions, gets down to brass tacks when he says, "We're going to have to decide as a society whether we want a domestic steel industry." (Steel people resort to a national-security argument, which the free traders easily puncture.)

If the answer is no—as it may well be—someone will have to think for a moment about what to do with the few—the very few, relatively—who have been wrecked by a phenomenon that has made the many fantastically rich.

Meanwhile, Weirton is trembling. And in Buchanan's pocket. **NR**

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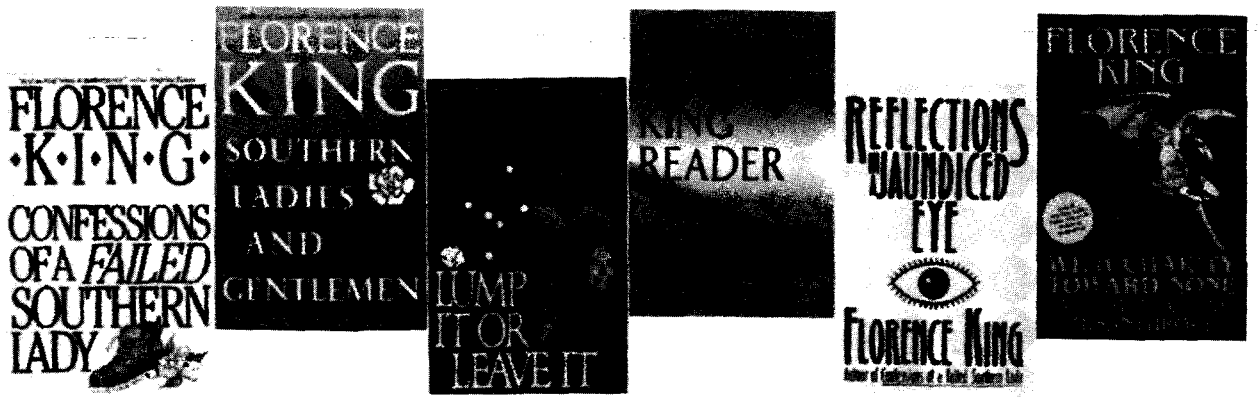
ALL THE KING'S BOOKS



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HELP!!!!

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"You bums have been to the microbrewery again, haven't you?"

Bureaucrat

He earned
recognition
in maritime annals
as one who went thru' the proper
channels.

Equivocator

He thought
he stood upright
and took courageous strides,
with both feet firmly planted on
all sides.

Drop-out

Withdrawn
from a rude world
where one could win or fail,
he found life only hurts if you
inhale.

—Gloria A. Maxson

"Someday, son, the bribes and kickbacks that come with this office will be yours."

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
AUSTIN

February 28, 1999

Ola Jebby!

Just raised twenty million bones. No problem. Guy calls up, says "George, I'm a buddy of your old man's" and FedExes me a check for ten million. I call him up, say, "Sir, okay, number A), thanks a million; number 2), I can't accept all that money 'cause in the first place I'm not sure I'm running and in the second place there's laws about that sort of thing."

He says, "Okay, rip up that check." So today I get another FedEx box with about 15,000 checks each for about $1500 each from a different person with a different signature and with a different bank account.

I know what you're thinking, brother. You're thinking "Buddhist City!" and "Send 'em back!"

Well, time out. Dad calls, says, "Did Stinky Harbinger send you a bunch of samoleons?" I say, "Yeah, Pops, he did." Dad sort of laughs, then says, "How much?" I tell him and he gets real upset. He tells me that old Stinky sent me twice as much as he sent him in '92. And then I say, "Maybe because Stinky knows I'm going to win." And Dad gets all quiet and moody like he did right after that first Iowa caucus.

That's going to be a problem, I think. It's one thing to be a front-runner, but it's another to be a bigger front-runner than your old man.

On the other hand, I'm pretty sure there weren't any pictures of Dad dancing nude on a bar in Matamoros. (Gotta get on top of that stuff, I think.)

So you wanna be my campaign treasurer? I mean, being governor of Florida is okay, Jebbie, and we're all real proud that you're not still hanging around the house watching cartoons, but it's Bobby Kennedy time for you, I think.

G.

(That's President G to you, kiddo! And to Dad, too—man, that'll frost him!)

THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

February 28, 1999

Dear Rusty,

Tipper's agreed not to run for the open Senate seat from Tennessee, so now we're hunkered down mapping out the coming campaign.

Can I be totally frank with you? I think I've got it pretty much wrapped up. The way I read the Republicans, we're talking Gary Bauer or, maybe, Dan Quayle. Of the two, Quayle I'm pretty sure I can lick with no problem—he's wrong on all the hot-button issues, Rusty. Wrong on logging rights and wrong on electric cars.

Bauer's not so clear. Part of his strength as a candidate comes from never having done anything—I know, I know . . . but Rusty, at least I've won a bunch of times—and of course, he's got charisma like you wouldn't believe. I'm going to have to tread carefully in that area.

The point is, now it's time to start talking about issues. Well, actually, now it's time to start talking about money, but I'm writing this in the Vice President's office and we're not supposed to talk about money while we're in the Vice President's office, so we have to talk about issues instead.

Okay, I've moved my laptop down the street to the Gore '00 headquarters. It's nice. High quality juice in the office refrigerator (set to "energy-save mode," I made sure of that) and comfortable chairs. Plus we can talk about money.

So here's my big question: You're down there in the Amazonian rain forest with all those indigenous people. Do they have any stuff? Like, things of value? I mean, I know that they have loads of things of value—what's more valuable than an ancient tree? Than the sound of an Orinoco tributary?—and yet, what I mean is, do they have anything that when converted into cash could purchase television airtime in 30-second increments?

Ask around, okay?

Your pal, Al

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God & His Enemies

DENNIS PRAGER

America's Real War, by Daniel Lapin (Multnomah, 362 pp., $19.99)

I CONSIDER any book that gives me one enduring insight, one brilliant idea, to be a bargain and a treasure. What then shall I say about a book that has not one, but scores of brilliant insights?

That is the case with Rabbi Daniel Lapin's *America's Real War*. While I take issue with a few of its suppositions, for its sheer number of illuminating ideas this book must be read by anyone wanting to understand America's present situation.

I did not expect to react so favorably. President of the Seattle-based Toward Tradition, a national group promoting traditional values, Rabbi Lapin is an Orthodox Jew. And though I am a religious Jew, I am not Orthodox—I teach Torah at a Conservative seminary and a Reform temple. I was also somewhat disappointed when I heard Rabbi Lapin speak at the 1996 Republican National Convention. I thought his talk was too political for an invocation.

But *America's Real War* is a brilliant cry from the heart. Rabbi Lapin's thesis is this: Either America will recover its Judeo–Christian heritage or the American enterprise will fail: "The choice is between a benign Christian culture and a sinister secular one." America's culture war is between religious, i.e., Judeo–Christian, ideas and anti-religious, i.e., secular, ideas. The more dominant the latter, the lower America sinks: "Almost every social pathology and nearly every sign of civic disarray can be traced to one thing: the extirpation of religion from American public life during the past three and a half decades."

Mr. Prager, a theologian and radio talk-show host, is the author most recently of *Happiness Is a Serious Problem*.

Detail of Norman Rockwell's Freedom of Worship *(1943)*

I too worry greatly about the decline of Christianity in America. Like Rabbi Lapin, I believe that it is good that America is a Christian nation. I want Christmas to be a national holiday; Sunday to be a special day; Christians to attend church; the Bible used in inaugurations; chaplains to address Congress; more Christmas carols on the radio and Christmas scenes at city halls; prayer (non-denominational) in schools; and so on.

I have had the privilege of speaking in nearly every Jewish community in America over the last 30 years, and I have frequently argued in favor of this view. Recently, I spoke to the Jewish community of a small North Carolina city. When some in the audience mentioned their fear of rising religiosity among Christians, I asked these audience-members if they loved living in their city. All of them said they did. Is it a coincidence, I then asked, that the city you so love—for its wonderful people, its safety for your children, its fine schools, and its values that enable you to raise your children with confidence—is a highly Christian city?

Too many Americans do not appreciate the connection between American greatness and American Christianity. Too many Americans believe that one can remove the source of greatness and retain the greatness. Rabbi Lapin makes this point over and over, and makes it well. And it is important that it is a rabbi who is saying this. When a Christian does so he is dismissed as speaking out of self-interest.

Of course, ironically, it is in Jews' and everyone else's interest to protest the dissolution of Christian norms in America. When Christianity broke down in 20th-century Europe, it was not replaced by Boy Scouts, but by the greatest murder-machines in human history—Communism and Nazism.

When callers to my radio show argue with me that religion in America has been irrelevant to the social good, I ask them this question: If you found yourself alone in a dark alley in a bad area of the city one night, and you saw ten men walking toward you, would you or would you not be relieved to know that they had just attended a Bible class?

Rabbi Lapin is angry. And his anger is particularly kindled against the Jewish community and Jewish organizations—for their "anti-Christian bigotry" and for their disproportionate involvement in radically secularizing causes that are hurting America. I understand his frustration. When I addressed an American Jewish Committee event some years ago, I asked the audience how that organization could defend abortion-on-demand from a Jewish moral position. I sympathized with their desire to keep abortion (in the first trimester) legal. But, I told them, we all also want to keep adultery legal, yet it would be hard to find any Jewish spokesperson who would morally defend adultery. Since Judaism does not consider the fetus fully human, I believe

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(though Rabbi Lapin does not) that we Jews can fight to keep abortion legal. But we should fight just as hard to condemn morally all abortions that are not performed to save the life or health of the mother—and vigorously promote adoption.

Most American Jews, Lapin argues, are liberals more than Jews. Their religion is liberalism, not Judaism. "If America's liberal Jews," he writes, "had to choose between a conservative America that genuinely guaranteed safety and security for Israel and a secular liberal America that threw Israel to the wolves, Israel would lose. If the deal offered to American Jews were, 'become pro-life in exchange for Israel's survival,' the answer would be a resounding 'no way.'"

Though people of every faith and of no faith should read *America's Real War*, I particularly hope that many Jews will read it. Lapin says many things that need to be heard and considered. In fact, at the beginning of the book he says something that I had never heard an Orthodox rabbi say—"God's blueprint clearly included the emergence of Christianity." No teacher in any of the yeshivas that I attended would have agreed.

This brings me to a problem that I have with Rabbi Lapin's thesis. As accurate and brilliant as Rabbi Lapin's indictment of the secular world is, he never explains why, or even notes that, few Orthodox Jews share his warm appraisal of Christianity. If his views really represent Judaism, Orthodox or otherwise, why does he not have more Orthodox allies?

There are many beautiful, even awe-inspiring, Orthodox Jews, and Orthodox Jews are far more likely than any other Jews to agree with conservative Christians about what ails America. But Rabbi Lapin's pro-Christian ideas would be regarded as problematic if not heretical in most of Orthodox Jewish life in America and Israel. (His book jacket displays enthusiastic endorsements by six fellow Orthodox rabbis, but these scholars are more the exceptions than the rule.) How would Rabbi Lapin explain what NR's David Klinghoffer notes in his new book, *The Lord Will Gather Me In*: that American Orthodox Jewish groups schedule conferences on Thanksgiving rather than celebrate this deeply religious Judeo–Christian holiday?

If Rabbi Lapin offers Orthodox Judaism as one of the solutions to the secular-induced crisis, he must one day explain its flaws as cogently as he does those of secularism. Likewise, since he repeatedly argues that Christianity uniquely produced wonderful societies, and that the Bible is the "blueprint of life," he must explain the social failure of Latin America, Russia, and most of Eastern Europe, all thoroughly Christian societies.

The key to understanding this book, I suspect, is that the religion Rabbi Lapin really admires and advocates for America is the Judaism-loving, Old Testament-loving, classical American Protestantism. This truly Judeo–Christian, perhaps uniquely Judeo–Christian, amalgam has been the greatest social and moral engine since Sinai. That is why he and I so fear its demise.

Such qualms notwithstanding, my greatest regret is that space limitations do not allow me to offer some of the many idea-gems that illuminate the book. One example: "'Secular scholars of the Bible' [is] surely as big an oxymoron as vegetarian scholars of beef cuisine." So you will have to buy and carefully read *America's Real War* for yourself. Afterward, if America fails, you will never be able to say you don't know why. **NR**

Blacklist Whitewash

JONATHAN FOREMAN

Hollywood Party: How Communism Seduced the American Film Industry in the 1930s and 1940s, by Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley (Forum, 365 pp., $25)

I SHOULD declare an interest, at one remove, in some of the issues this book attempts to raise. It's a complicated story, but in 1951, 14 years before I was born, my father, Carl Foreman, appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. At the time he was producing the film *High Noon*, for which he had written the screenplay, but more than a decade earlier he had been in the Communist Party. He told the committee this and how his disillusionment had caused him to leave the Party, but when pressed to name others whom he knew to have been in the CP at the time—even others who had already been named—he refused. (After all, he himself had been named in perjurious testimony by a man he'd never met.) He was therefore deemed an "uncooperative witness" and immediately blacklisted by the Hollywood studio cartel.

Exile in England followed. And eventually, after years of writing scripts under pseudonyms, so did a second career. In the meantime, my father, a World War II veteran, never ceased to be a patriot, never even considered giving up American citizenship, never ceased to be outraged by treason. (I remember well his outraged reaction to Jane Fonda's wartime visit to Hanoi.) He had no respect for those who continued to be taken in by Stalin. But he also had contempt for the pointlessly destructive political-correctness machine that operated the Hollywood blacklist.

When Winston Churchill asked him to write a movie based on his early life, my father reminded him that he had been blacklisted in Hollywood. The old man replied, "Oh, I know all about you. But we don't like political blacklists in England. And speaking for myself, I don't care what a man believed in when he was a boy. My concern is whether or not he can do the job."

As a career-long Tory myself, I've never seen any evidence that this point of view is wrong. Maybe in the future someone will write a book showing that there was in fact a real point to the ritual denunciations of Communist, ex-Communist, or "fellow-traveling" actors, directors, and writers. Films like my father's *Champion* or *The Men* will in that case be shown to contain secret radical messages that somehow got past the producers and the studios and the critics and the audience. If so, then what now looks a lot like a cynical publicity exercise that allowed HUAC members

Mr. Foreman is a movie critic at the *New York Post*.

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to spend long periods of time out on the coast being photographed with movie stars will prove to have been work vital to the safety of the Republic. The highly profitable private-sector business of denouncing and "clearing" people who worked in film will look less like a sleazy shakedown. And the studios and agencies that actually enforced the blacklist won't look like greedy cowards thrilled to have some of their most expensive "talent" on the hook.

■

Were those movie people who were called before HUAC an actual or even a potential threat to national security?

■

But anyone looking for a scholarly, intelligent attempt to examine the period of the Hollywood blacklist through a revisionist lens will be disappointed by this amateurish potboiler. Even the sexy subtitle seems tacked on by someone at the publishing house who hadn't bothered to read the book—after all, it deals largely with the Fifties and after, not the Thirties and Forties. And rather than explain or even document this alleged "seduction," *Hollywood Party* makes no effort at all to understand why Communism might have seemed attractive to the kind of people who ended up in that industry.

For most of its length, it feels like an article that has been stretched, flattened, and teased into a very thin skein. Wary readers can quickly spot this sort of artificial expansion by the unusually big print, and by the number of pages taken up at the front with widely spaced tables of *dramatis personae*, abbreviations, and organizations—and an embarrassing timeline listing key events like "1939, World War II begins" and "1950, North Korea invades South Korea." This book fails on every level to challenge standard left-leaning accounts of the period such as Victor Navasky's *Naming Names*.

For a start, it contains almost no primary research. Apart from his apparent access to the self-serving papers of Roy Brewer, a thuggish union boss who became one of those Hollywood fixers who could arrange blacklist "clearances" (and who was not nearly as important a figure as one might think from reading *Hollywood Party*), Billingsley relies entirely on the (often misunderstood) work of others and his own overheated rhetoric.

But even that might be tolerable if he dealt with some of the really interesting questions posed by the complex political history of Hollywood in this period: Were those movie people who were called before HUAC in any way an actual or even a potential threat to national security? Besides *Song of Russia* and *Mission to Moscow*, two wartime pro-Soviet films (the second of which was actually adapted from Ambassador Joseph Davies's book at the request of FDR), can one detect any ideological taint in the movies that these people made?

Now that the Venona decrypts and parts of the Soviet KGB archives are available to historians, it would obviously make sense to see whether these shed any light on the threat allegedly posed by Marxist movie directors. Billingsley chose not to go down this avenue, possibly because research that has already been done seems to indicate that Hollywood could scarcely have been a lower priority back at KGB HQ. (Lenin and Stalin may well have stated now and then that they thought cinema a vital and powerful tool of the people's struggle, but they also said that same kind of thing about tractor factories and inspirational poetry.)

Then there is the question as to what it actually meant at various times to be a member of the American Communist Party. (With his instinct for the dramatic cliché, Billingsley uses words like "cell," but the Hollywoodites whose social and professional lives were linked with the Party were not organized in cells like deep-cover agents in a Seventies spy thriller.) While there is absolutely no question that the American Communist Party leadership took its orders directly from the Kremlin, it is far from clear to what extent the Soviet contacts of the Party's upper echelons affected the hundreds of thousands of Americans who passed through the Party. How did they in fact balance their allegiance to it with their allegiance to their country—significant numbers of them were after all military veterans—or for that matter with their allegiance to their own careers and financial interests? How much was it about political activity and how much about meeting and impressing girls who believed in free love?

A serious revisionist would also have to deal with the peculiar way HUAC functioned when it was on the West Coast. What was the point of only asking questions to which the answer was already known? What function was served by forcing present or former Communists ritualistically to name others? What of the role of informers in the Fifties and today? Both liberals and conservatives often share the traditional American contempt for the stool pigeon—while tending to approve of "whistleblowers."

It's not clear whether *Hollywood Party* is as unsatisfying as it is because the author had only enough material for a magazine article or because it is crude revisionism-for-its-own-sake, not intended to be part of a reasoned discussion. There are, after all, those on the right who have so absorbed the paranoid style and ends-justify-the-means ruthlessness of the Left that they aren't really conservatives at all.

Of course it's annoying when some of our shallow, ignorant contemporary movie stars talk about the blacklist as if it were a crime akin to the Soviet Gulags. But because what happened was not the Gulag, and because being blacklisted (or forced to be a Judas) by the studio cartel that controlled all filmmaking in the United States, is not as bad as being imprisoned or shot for your beliefs, that scarcely means that the process was all right and good. After all, in America, we measure our historical record by American standards of decency and political freedom, not Soviet ones. **NR**

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Virtuecrats

FLORENCE KING

George III: A Personal History, by Christopher Hibbert (Basic, 464 pp., $27)

AMERICA'S last king was the first national figure we condemned as "out of touch," yet if George III reappeared today he would energize so many focus groups that both parties would draft him for Campaign 2000. He had enough virtues for Bill Bennett, enough family values for Gary Bauer, enough ethnic insecurities for Bob Torricelli, and enough depraved sons to start a new Clinton administration.

His reign of 60 years (1760–1820) was longer than most due to the death of his father, the Prince of Wales, when he was 13. Nine years later his grandfather, George II, died and the stripling prince became George III, the first of the "German Georges" to be born in England instead of their native duchy of Hanover.

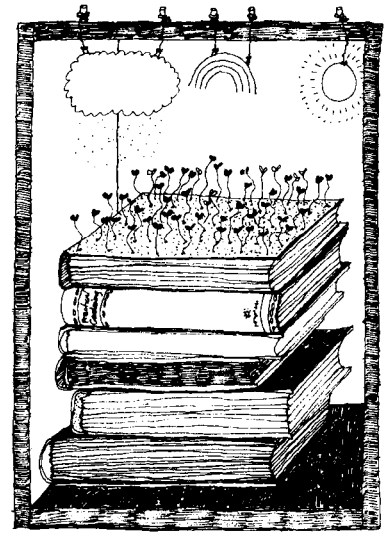
Despite his youth he had no interest in sowing wild oats. Legend has it that he had an early affair with a Quaker woman, Hannah Lightfoot, and fathered three children by her, but the letter he wrote to his tutor, Lord Bute, suggests he was still a virgin and wanted to remain one. He confessed to:

> a daily increasing admiration of the fair sex which I am attempting with all the philosophy and resolution I am capable of to keep under. . . . How strong a tussle there is between the boiling youth of 21 years and prudence! The last I hope will ever keep the upper hand, indeed, if I can weather it out a few years, marriage will put a stop to this combat in my breast.

The slightly priggish tone of this letter and its undercurrent of self-conscious pride in his own rectitude were typical. One of the first acts of his reign was a proclamation entitled "The Encouragement of Piety and Virtue," in which he vowed to "punish all manner of vice, profaneness, and immorality." As a constitutional monarch he had nothing but the power of example, but he used it, sometimes with comical ineffectualness, as when he made a point of rationing his mourning for the adulterous Horatio Nelson while all of England was awash in grief.

His concern for his image was rooted in insecurity. He longed to be seen as a true Englishman, but the Hanoverian claim to the throne was a stretch, going back to a daughter of Charles I who had married the Elector of Hanover, whereas Bonnie Prince Charlie, who was still alive, was the grandson of the deposed Stuart king, the Catholic James II. The Hanoverians were offered the Crown because they swore to uphold Protestantism, but the Stuarts had the stronger claim.

It may have been a subconscious desire to inject his descendants with some Stuart blood that made George fall in love with Lady Sarah Lennox, great-granddaughter of Charles II by one of his mistresses, and propose to her. As a Protestant she was eligible, but Lord Bute, fearful that an English queen's male relatives would clamor for government posts, insisted that George marry a German princess. Eager to please Bute, whose Scottish accent he imitated, George gave in without a struggle, using the opportunity to issue another virtue bulletin: "The interest of my country shall ever be my first care, my own inclination shall ever submit to it. I am born for the happiness or misery of a great nation, and consequently must often act contrary to my passion."



He took no interest in the choice of a bride. Any Protestant princess would do, and while a pretty one would be nice, it wasn't necessary: Whatever Lord Bute decided was fine by him. Bute, assisted by George's mother, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, chose Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, whose simian features jarred with the freshness of her 17 years. The contrast grew less jarring in middle age, when a Court wag would observe, "The bloom has gone off her ugliness."

They were married the same day they met. Such brutal dynastic arrangements spelled disaster for many another royal couple, but not these two. Charlotte was as pliable, dutiful, and as eager to please as George, so they pooled their virtues and pleased each other.

Though delicately built and small-breasted, Charlotte proved a champion whelper. She had 15 children—eight boys and seven girls—nine of them before she was 30, all of them big and

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The parents whose multitude of virtues concealed a multitude of virtues ended up with a litter from Hell.

■

several born so fast that she barely had time to get into bed. George was as devoted to his children as he was faithful to their mother, ever alert to the need to set a good example for them, especially for the two oldest boys, George, Prince of Wales, known as "Prinny," and Frederick, Duke of York.

He set the best of examples, getting up at 5 A.M. and lighting his own fire, writing a précis of every book he read, and demonstrating the pleasures of self-denial with his abstemious dietary habits, such as eating only the fruit filling of pies and leaving the pastry. Charlotte went along with all of it, doing her part by upholding the standards of Court decorum described by novelist Fanny Burney, one of her women-in-waiting.

"If you find a cough tickling your throat you must arrest it from making any sound; if you find yourself choking with forbearance, you must choke—but not cough.

"In the second place, you must not sneeze . . . you must oppose it by keeping your teeth grinding together; if the violence of the repulse break some blood-vessel, you must break the blood-vessel—but not sneeze. . . .

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"If, however, the agony is very great, bite the inside of your cheek for a little relief; taking care to make no apparent dent outwardly. If you gnaw a piece out, it will not be minded, only be sure either to swallow it or commit it to a corner of the inside of your mouth, for you must not spit."

The parents whose multitude of virtues concealed a multitude of virtues ended up with a litter from Hell. Prinny and Freddie became so obstreperous that their tutor, to save time, beat them both at once like the Katzenjammer Kids. Prinny became a compulsive eater, drinker, and gambler who brushed off suggestions of constructive activity with, "The day is quite long enough to do nothing." Convinced that his father hated him, he got even by entering into an invalid marriage with a Catholic in a secret ceremony, and later accused his legal, Protestant wife of adultery in the House of Lords. Craving maternal warmth, he sought out mistresses older than himself, often sharing them with his favorite crony and the King's sworn political enemy, Charles James Fox, an atheist who spat on the floor, paddled naked in a giant bowl of cream, and urinated on the dinner roast.

Freddie's mistress, Mary Anne Clarke, was arrested for selling army commissions. The third son, William, Duke of Clarence, lived with the actress Dora Jordan, who had 14 illegitimate children, ten of them his. Edward, Duke of Kent, lived in voluntary exile in Paris with his French mistress. Ernest, Duke of Cumberland, was suspected in the murder of his valet. Augustus, Duke of Sussex, took up radical politics and married his much-older mistress, who tried to shake down the King with threats to publish royal documents in her possession.

By the time this dynastic Jerry Springer show played itself out, virtue junkies George III and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz had 56 illegitimate grandchildren, including one by Princess Amelia. Add the King's periods of insanity, his attempt to strangle his heir, and the Queen's terrified flight from his boudoir in her shift and you have another irresistible biography by British writer Christopher Hibbert, peerless master of history with its pomp down. **NR**

Daddy Dearest

ANTHONY LEJEUNE

Single & Single, by John le Carré (Scribner, 352 pp., $26)

It was always an absurd idea that John le Carré's occupation as a writer of spy stories would be outmoded because the Cold War ended. There have been spies and spy stories since before Joshua sent secret agents into Jericho, and today's world of revolutionary factions and competing terrorists constitutes an especially rich field; one corner of which, the strife-torn, gangster-ridden region of what used to be the Soviet Union, has provided an immediately suitable context for John le Carré's habitual themes.

In *Single & Single* he returns to "the Wild East" for both the villainous origins and the violent climax of his plot, although most of the narrative takes place elsewhere. It concerns a private bank in London, outwardly very solid and respectable. Behind its handsome doors, the institution both finances and launders huge profits from the trade in "Afghan heroin for teenagers, Czech Semtex for Irish peace-lovers, and Russian nuclear triggers for Middle Eastern democrats," even blood supplies diverted from impoverished Russians to rich American hospitals. This bank is the creation of Tiger Single, a flamboyant yet plausible confidence trickster. He makes the mistake of bringing his lawyer-son Oliver into the firm, and rendering him privy to its secrets, not realizing that Oliver happens to be a conscience-wracked, honest man.

Oliver secretly cooperates with a team of undercover security and customs officers working to expose his father's rackets. The bank actually comes unstuck as much through internecine squabbles in Georgia and Turkey as through Oliver's betrayal. He has been lying low in the British coun-

Mr. Lejeune is NR's London correspondent.

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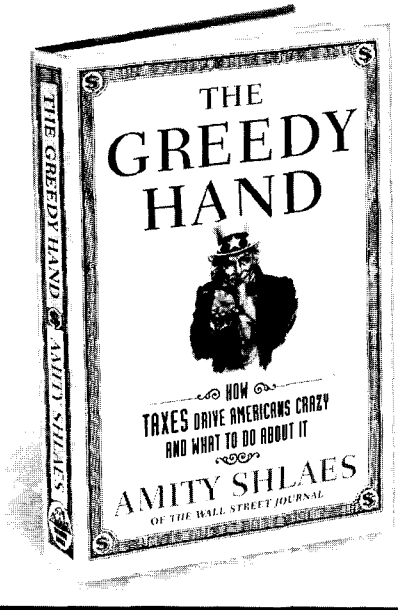

RANDOM HOUSE
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tryside, earning a meager income as a magician at children's parties. From this retreat he emerges only when he learns that his father has disappeared. Then he sets out to rescue the half-loved, half-hated old scoundrel.

Which brings us back to le Carré himself—or perhaps one should say to David Cornwell, his real name. The details of his own extraordinary background have come to light in recent years, bit by bit, as he became more relaxed about them. What we knew at first, or thought we knew, was that he had a normal upper-middle-class English education, was a linguist at Oxford, served in the army for a year or so, taught briefly at Eton, and then (we suspected) worked for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service until the success of his books freed him to become a full-time writer. All true—up to a point: but it was just one image in his personal "wilderness of mirrors," a phrase he applied to the secret world of espionage.

■

John le Carré seems haunted still by his childhood demons, and to be trying still to exorcise them through his books.

■

His father, Ronald Cornwell, was an incorrigible con man, a fantasist, charming, mendacious, imprisoned for fraud, repeatedly judged bankrupt. His mother abandoned the marriage when David was five, and he didn't see her again until he was 21. Ronnie, however, kept coming back, so David grew up accustomed to dodging creditors and watching his father's louche, even criminal companions. To survive at school he covered himself with the romantic fictions propagated by his father. Decades later, Ronald Cornwell, broke as usual, took to calling himself Ron le Carré, implying that he was the affluent author of his son's books.

With so doubtful a background, David Cornwell seems an odd recruit for the Intelligence Service to have accepted. (But no odder than Kim Philby, who turned out to be a major Soviet spy, and whose father, St. John Philby, was a notoriously anti-British Arabist.) In the event, perhaps because of the moral ambiguities and deceptions of his childhood, he proved to be a man of absolute integrity and loyalty. He admits, though, to being full of inconsistencies. The "wilderness of mirrors" may disgust him, but he still defends the secret world and his role in it, which may have included the spotting of Communist fellow-travelers among his academic colleagues. "Somebody," he said in a rare interview, "has to clean the drains." He condemns unreservedly traitors to the Western cause and critics of Western intelligence.

Domestically, he leans to the left. He is anti-Thatcherite, a Europhile, implicitly anti-American. He is anti-Establishment but fascinated by Establishment institutions. He would like to abolish private schools, such as those he attended, the one where he taught, and those to which he sent his sons. Professionally, he began by writing a fairly straightforward spy story and a detective story but always had more highbrow aspirations; now he writes distinctly "literary" novels but despises the literary world, which he believes—wrongly—despises him.

At the age of 67 he seems haunted still by his childhood demons, and to be trying still to exorcise them through his books. *A Perfect Spy* told his own story under the lightest fictional disguise. Tiger and Oliver Single are again unmistakable reincarnations of Ronald and David Cornwell. He is troubled not only by the paradoxes of loyalty and betrayal but by the traumas of a father–son relationship—to which, this time, he gives a downbeat but relatively happy culmination. There is a love interest too, but female characters are treated somewhat perfunctorily.

Such curious considerations should not distract us from a simpler truth. John le Carré's books are impressive because he is an excellent craftsman, writing clear, classic prose and constructing his intricate plots so that they fit together like well-carpentered marquetry. For some readers they may be too intricate. With the exception of the first two, le Carré's novels have never been exactly an easy read. The opening chapter of *Single & Single* describes a horrifying, apparently mistaken, killing: The narrative then twists back through convoluted times and places until, just before the final, more conventionally dramatic chapter, everything becomes clear. Need the story have been told in such a complicated way? Probably not.

But does it matter? Surely not, since the result is a decidedly unusual, satisfying book; literary novel and thriller combined, not quite le Carré's best but a great deal better than most modern authors can supply. Perhaps it has also helped, finally, to free David Cornwell from his demons. **NR**

■ ART ■

Sargent Major

DAVID KLINGHOFFER

Q: "How is your gold-digging whore of a mother enjoying Bali?"

A: "She suspects that your impotent, alcoholic father is diddling the maid."

So goes a typical exchange from the new teen flick *Cruel Intentions*, about a super-wealthy pair of step-siblings who set out to ruin a beautiful virgin on a wager. Step-sister Kathryn promises step-brother Sebastian she'll go to bed with him ("You can put it anywhere you like") if he can overcome the scruples of the unsuspecting virtue-goddess.

Wandering around the special-exhibit rooms at Washington's National Gallery, I tried to imagine the words of Kathryn and Sebastian in the mouths of the super-rich French, Brits, and Americans of the Victorian era, as depicted in the portraits of John Singer Sargent, now on view. It didn't work.

Now, let's not fall into the conserva-

Mr. Klinghoffer, an NR senior editor, is the author of *The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy.*

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tive trap of romanticizing Victorians. If you want some notion of what Sargent's patrons might have sounded like—the Lady Ida Sitwells, the Lord Ribblesdales who could afford to have him paint their pictures—just open a Henry James novel. Listen to the unbearable prissiness, the interminable "wit" of their conversations.

But in defense of Victorians, try another thought experiment. Imagine some of the more celebrated luxury-class individuals of our own day if they were to be portrayed by Sargent: Bill Gates, George Soros, Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg. No, that doesn't work either. Wealthy Victorians had *something* that allowed them to be depicted so gorgeously, in a mood of almost unearthly dignity, and yet not appear ridiculous—as Gates, Soros, and the rest would.

Portrait of Edouard and Marie-Louise Pailleron (1881)

Sargent painted with an impressionist's rich palette and quick brush strokes. Less sugary-sweet than Monet, his prettiest pictures aren't formal portraits at all but snapshot candids of children in natural settings: like *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (1885–6), with its two delicate little English girls lighting paper fairy lanterns in an overgrown garden. The lanterns glow on the canvas as if real fire burned in them.

Still, the essence of Sargent is portraiture. In *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* (1892), a stunningly beautiful woman reclines in a wide chair, wearing a white gown with a violet silk sash at her narrow waist, dark hair tied back, large eyes looking entrancingly up at us, mouth showing a hint of a smile. The frustrating thing about terrific art is that it's impossible to specify just what quality makes it terrific. One can only describe, barely. Something in this woman's face compels you to stand and gaze at her. No modern rich man's wife could be painted this way.

Did Sargent intend simply to make baronial types look fabulous? Nothing in his life story (1856–1925) illuminates his views of the high society to which he himself never belonged. The son of a peripatetic doctor from Philadelphia, he grew up in Italy, Switzerland, France, and Germany. After studying art in Paris, he began doing portraits of French aristocrats, but relocated to England after his portrait of Madame Gautreau (1884) scandalized the Paris Salon: A shoulder strap on her black gown had slipped provocatively off her right shoulder.

Tireless in his studio, Sargent did much but said little. A friend described him as a "curiously inarticulate man, he used to splutter and gasp, almost growl with the strain of trying to express himself." Looked at closely, his best pictures are more articulate than their creator.

Notice, first, that the men and women Sargent painted tend to be unable to sit up straight. Several at the National Gallery are shown as if asleep or drugged, as in *Siesta* (1905), *Reclining Figure* (1908), and *Nonchaloir (Repose)* (1911). Quite a few of his subjects appear unwell. Pale, skinny *W. Graham Robertson* (1894) and pale, bug-eyed *Miss Elsie Palmer* (1890) should seek medical attention ASAP. The languorous, almost reptilian *Lord Dalhousie* (1900) has a sunburnt face: not a healthy tan, but a splash of red interrupted by a band of white at the forehead. Evidently while out in the sun, like an old man, this 22-year-old was wearing a hat. The vivid colors Sargent favored occasionally suggest the faintest hint of tropical rot.

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Did John Singer Sargent intend simply to make baronial types look fabulous?

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The liveliest among his patrons are the most arriviste, especially a London art dealer and self-made man, moist-lipped *Asher Wertheimer* (1898). The Jewish merchant's pretty, bosomy daughter Ena (1901), with her charming arched eyebrows and mouth full of teeth, actually looks like . . . fun.

The Wertheimers may be the only subjects here obviously capable of reproducing. Over many of the rest there hangs a vague impression of sterility—through fragile health, general ennui, or something more subtle. Sargent's most unsettling, in fact mesmerizing, images are groups of siblings. The *Portrait of Edouard and Marie-Louise Pailleron* (1881) shows a pair of French kids who stare out at us contemptuously, yet are not in any way united by their hauteur. Like the four young girls in *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882), who stand at apparently random points around a handsome Paris apartment, Edouard and Marie-Louise seem utterly cut off: from each other, from other people. Henry James, a friend of Sargent, was struck by the eerie absence of "vitality" among the Boit girls—two of whom later turned out to be mentally disturbed.

If today there is no ruling class worth taking as seriously as Sargent took such aristocrats of his time, these pictures hint at a reason. Undoubtedly most of Sargent's patrons did in fact reproduce, in the literal sense—the sense that doesn't matter very much. (Not all did: None of the Boit girls ever married.) They passed on their money and genes. They did not pass on the most valuable legacy once held by their ancestors: the confidence to rule, to set an example.

Let's not, either, fall into the other conservative trap of romanticizing aristocrats. But a long time ago they served a purpose, preserving traditions of right behavior and true belief. In Sargent's day, in their role as conservators, they were dying. Today they are dead.

With each generation, having no consistent and dependable guardians, those traditions are increasingly in danger of being lost altogether. Certainly they get no support from Steven Spielberg and Oprah Winfrey, or the Kathryns and Sebastians of Beverly Hills and Southampton. It's hard to see what can reverse the progress of devolution, the decay of the traditions, short of apocalypse. **NR**

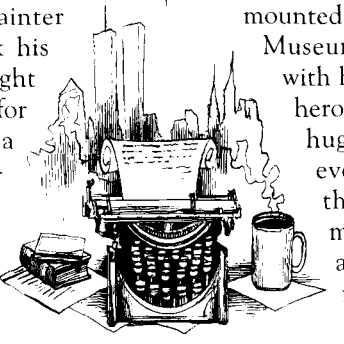
■ CITY DESK ■

American Piraeus

RICHARD BROOKHISER

WHAT happens to an avant-garde when it straggles behind?

I overtook an avant-garde of the past on a foray out of the city. The Newington-Cropsey Foundation, a conservative foundation devoted to the regeneration of art and culture, invited me to give a lecture on one of the unimpeached presidents at its headquarters in Hastings-on-Hudson, a commuter town half an hour up the river from Manhattan. When I arrived I found the room in which I was to speak hung with 30 canvases of one of the foundation's namesakes, Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823–1900), a late-blooming artist of the Hudson River School. I had never given a speech in the open air; this would be a speech in many different open airs: rippling fields, slumbrous woods, mile-wide skies, with here and there a ruined classical pediment (however far a Hudson River School painter traveled, he always took his canvases and his sunlight with him). A good rule for speakers is always to wear a bright tie, to give the audience something to look at in case you lose your focus. But that night there was so much competition from the walls that I had no alternative but to concentrate.



Cropsey painted a lot in the Hudson River Valley, but the school began in New York City in the 1820s, when Col. John Trumbull, the aging Jacques-Louis David of the American Revolution, spotted some canvases by a young man named Thomas Cole in the window of an eating-house. Trumbull recognized them for something different, and a new avant-garde began. Out with heroes, in with heroic landscape.

Cole was an English immigrant, and Trumbull a Connecticut Yankee. As a young man Trumbull tried to persuade his father, who was the state's governor, that art was a worthy calling, as witness the glories of Athens. "You appear to forget, sir," the old man rejoined, "that Connecticut is not Athens." So what were Cole and Trumbull doing in New York City? What every artist does: looking for money and attention. New York isn't Athens either, but it has long been Piraeus. So aesthetes flock there, to pick its pockets and catch its eye.

■

New Yorkers don't necessarily have superior taste. But, more important, they have each other.

■

Abstract expressionism flourished closer to us in time than the Hudson River School, so the recent Jackson Pollock retrospective could still be mounted within city limits, at the Museum of Modern Art. Out with heroic landscape, in with heroic lines. The show was a huge success; for weeks, even when it was sleeting, the sidewalk before the museum was choked with art lovers, eager to be edified. Inside, the museum ran a solemn film of the artist himself, flicking away at a masterpiece. Unlike the Postal Service, they did not airbrush his cigarette. My wife said she was lucky to have been too young for him, because his maudit look was her old type. There was an indirect compliment to me in this, since I too am losing my hair.

My reaction to Pollock's work was unsurprising: I admired several pieces from the drip period, and found everything before or after callow or decrepit.

Mr. Brookhiser, an NR senior editor, is the author of *Alexander Hamilton, American*, published this month by Free Press.

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What did surprise me was how dated even the good drip paintings were. The rooms in which they hung seemed empty. Where were the kidney-shaped coffee tables? The martinis? The copies of *Life*? Pollock's technique bore an obvious kinship to other Fifties design artifacts, such as formica countertops, or magazine illustrations by LeRoy Nieman. If I stepped back far enough, would I see the football players?

When we are sufficiently remote from a common style all sorts of unexpected sibling relationships appear. A new style begins as an unconscious itch to try something different. This itch is not the same as the impulse to proclaim new movements, which is a phenomenon in the history of hype, not style. Secretly every artist believes in the uniqueness of his genius; only long after the fact do we see that all the rebels were striking off in a similar direction. These shifts of style have nothing to do with quality. Sometimes the best thing is the latest thing; sometimes it is Bach, mired in a backwater, working out all the implications of fugues with the patience of a crank squaring the circle. The spirit bloweth where it listeth, and a genius may find a sunburst under an old stone. Even representational art, recouping in Hastings-on-Hudson, might storm the ramparts once again.

If it does, it will come back to New York. New Yorkers don't necessarily have superior taste. But they have money and curiosity. Most important, they have each other, as models and goads: Does my neighbor understand something I don't? Their flying wedges of enthusiasm take up much that is meretricious, but also a fair proportion of whatever is good—on those rare occasions when an artist produces it.

One more gallery tour: a cocktail party in the eyrie of a magnate. His living room has a view of the East River, a burnt-out hospital, and an old Pepsi-Cola sign. The place must be worth millions. Still more bucks have been spent on his art collection, which is an anthology of latest things: Warhol, Bacon, Lucien Freud. Striding across a table is a Giacometti figure, as if fleeing it all. Most of the work is dreadful, but you had to admire his assiduity. Long may he wave. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Queasy Quests

JOHN SIMON

THE only things lacking from what is playing in your neighborhood theater are likely to be imagination, originality, and daring. Or, if daring there is, it is apt to be of the crassest kind. The prime, and dumbest, current example is Roger Kumble's *Cruel Intentions*, the transposition of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* into a contemporary New York private-school setting, with a teenage Sebastian Valmont and Kathryn Merteuil wreaking sexual havoc. And then there is *8mm*.

Mrs. Christian, the elderly widow of a just-deceased Pennsylvania nabob, discovers in her husband's safe a snuff film, i.e., a movie in which a young woman is tortured to death, seemingly for real. She summons a reputable, albeit small-time, private detective, Tom Welles, to track down the filmmakers and the victim-heroine, to find out what truly happened. Welles, a recent father living modestly in Harrisburg, cannot resist so unusual a case with an unlimited per diem, despite the entreaties of his wife, Amy. With relative (and unconvincing) ease, he tracks down the girl's mother in North Carolina. It transpires her daughter ran off with a boyfriend to Los Angeles to break into the movies.

From here on, Welles keeps making hurried and harried phone calls from L.A. and elsewhere to either his wife or his client, meant to convey affectionate solicitude and breathless pursuit. Typically unpersuasive are Amy's high-pitched pleas that he give up the case, as if she had mistaken the man she married for an accountant.

In Los Angeles, Welles haunts the porn stores for a lead, in scenes that strongly resemble those of Paul Schrader's *Hardcore*, where a father searched for his runaway daughter. Once again, finding a needle in a haystack is made to look like a middling challenge. Welles

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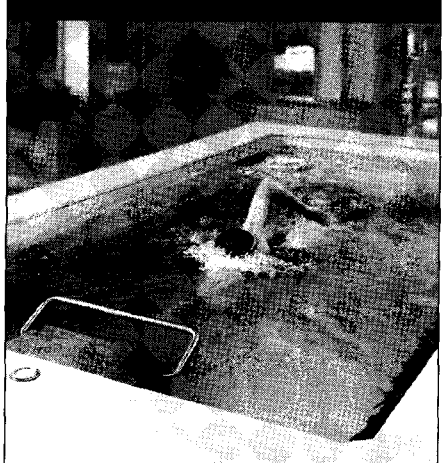

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ENDLESS POOLS

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picks up a young porn salesman, Max, whose wit and savvy impress him, to be his Virgil through this porn Inferno. The path soon leads to a particularly odious porn filmmaker, Eddie Poole, and thence to his even more sinister New York colleague, Dino Velvet (James Gandolfini and Peter Stormare, good and creepy). Still, whenever Welles, in the most disreputable places, asks for snuff films, he is either told that no such things exist, or roughed up as if he had asked a Mafia boss to procure his sister for him.

The director, Joel Schumacher, claims that the work is social and moral commentary, and maybe it was so intended, but it is extremely hard to make such a movie without salaciousness and hypocritical posturing. What he and the writer, Andrew Kevin Walker, had to do

■

How did Kevin Costner become the inexpressive hulk, the passive noncommunicator of *Message in a Bottle*?

■

is to convey the properly improper atmosphere without falling into the very thing they were reprehending. This requires a parlous dance on the high wire while being shot at from both sides—for showing too much or not enough.

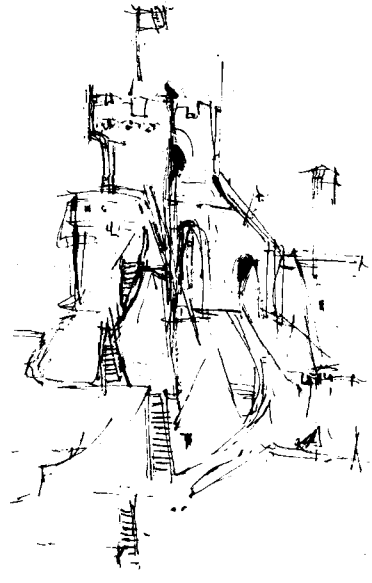
Take the scene where Mrs. Christian (note the tendentious name) has Welles watch the eponymous snuff movie in her sumptuous mansion. First we see as much preliminary torture as seems allowable (with the victim decorously permitted to keep her undies on), then we switch, in reverse angle, to Welles's horrified reactions. But Nicolas Cage is such a limited actor that his solemn basic mode here merely escalates into the exacerbated discomfiture of a patient whose dentist would economize on novocaine.

Again, when Welles is returning to New York to find the last malefactor he has not yet disposed of, a fellow he saw being shot in the stomach with a dart, he simply picks up his car phone, dials every hospital he can think of, and, pretending to be a police lieutenant Anderson, requests the name and address of a patient with such a wound. When he gets the right hospital, the information is promptly and unquestioningly provided. Hmmm?

Oddly enough, *8mm*'s scenarist also gave us the much better *Seven* in 1995, a film about a serial killer that was both scary and believable, but that also benefited from the key presence of Kevin Spacey, a much better actor than Nick Cage. Nor am I partial to the Amy of Catherine Keener, an actress who capitalizes on her one outstanding feature: homeliness. But Joaquin Phoenix as Max, Myra Carter as Mrs. Christian, and Amy Morton as the missing girl's mother all do nicely.

I accept the press kit's statement that "billions of dollars are being spent every year on mainstream and illegal pornography," though I would welcome enlightenment about the difference between the two in any case. A true artist, genuinely concerned, is free to explore a seamy subject, but the Schumacher-Walker-Cage triumvirate does not persuade me of such artistry. Nor does my most disliked film composer, Mychael Danna, contributing yet another score combining non-Western ululations with, to quote the press kit again, "electronics, minimalism, and manipulation."

■ Another, very different sort of quest film is ***Message in a Bottle***, about a Chicago newspaper journalist who, on her New England vacation, discovers embedded in the beach sand a bottle containing a love letter. She (like, I assume, the screenwriter, Gerald DiPego) considers this missive supremely poetic and moving, and persuades her oafish editor at the paper to subsidize her search for its author as good potential copy.



This sensitive letter—to a dead wife, as it turns out—was written, as our heroine discovers with somewhat improbable ease, by a boat-builder on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Even more improbably, he is played by Kevin Costner, who, throughout the movie, displays the sensitivity and eloquence of a pizza deliveryman.

I shan't detain you with the details of the ensuing love story, a weepie that allows the choice of shedding tears over its content or its quality. Only three things are of genuine interest here. First, the wonderful performance by the lovely, extremely talented, and rather underused Robin Wright Penn, who can make the most dubious bit of dialogue sound as if it came from the right pen. Next, the extraordinary cinematography of Caleb Deschanel, making not only the boating scenes but also everything else seem almost distractingly beautiful, a failing, if such it be, to be gratefully welcomed in Luis Mandoki's dully directed film.

But most amazing to me is the steady deterioration of the producer and star, Kevin Costner, completely outacted by Paul Newman in the small supporting role of his father, not to mention the leading lady. I suppose what attracted him to this (as they say) property—initially a novel by Nicholas Sparks—is the chance to play the strong and silent type. But the piece is even less interesting than Costner's previous bombs, *Waterworld* and *The Postman*, whose dystopias at least took place in the future rather than mucking up the present.

Do you remember the charming actor in such films as *Silverado*, *Bull Durham*, and several others? How did Costner become the inexpressive hulk, the passive non-communicator of *Message in a Bottle*? Is it merely the ravages of stardom? I don't know. But it looks more and more as if not the message but the messenger should be bottled. Well, at least this isn't the yachting version of *Dangerous Liaisons*. And what kinds of movies are deserved by an audience in which a young man seated behind me and noisily munching on something from a crackling cellophane bag, when asked to desist, replied cockily, "This is the movies. People eat here"? **NR**

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Reagan Lives

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 5

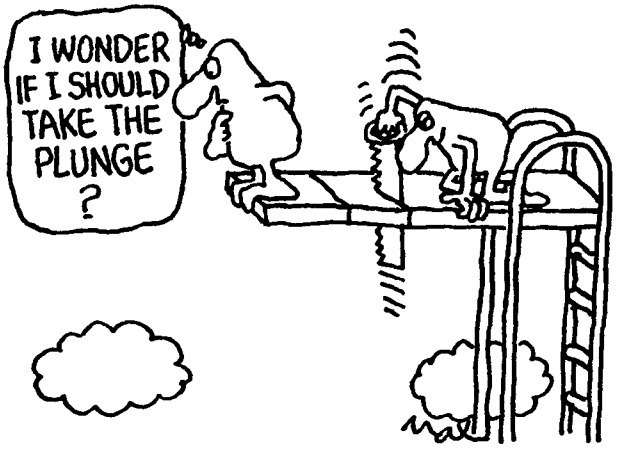
RONALD REAGAN, in the sadness of his plight, may no longer know that it was his birthday (88th) last week, but it wasn't lost on his team, many of whom gathered at the Reagan Library and Museum in Simi Valley to say it again, with trenchancy, and wit, and affection, that they continue grateful to him. The Reagan Center is 30 miles north of Los Angeles, in 100 acres of broadly hilly countryside. From the terrace of the huge building the view is to the west and reminds us how expansive and uncrowded even California can be. At the stone-paved arc is a six-foot jagged rectangular structure and the instinct is to think sadly that one of those anarchic sculptors hoodwinked the trustees of the museum; but what it is is a segment of the wall in Berlin that Reagan instructed Gorbachev to tear down. A nice historical touch, nearby, is a photograph taken at this site, of Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, five years after that famous speech. The occasion? The conferral of the first (annual) Reagan Freedom Award on the sometime leader of the sometime superpower, Mikhail Gorbachev.

There were many speeches and seminars during the two days' celebration. The opening was done by former prime minister Brian Mulroney, a lyrical tribute to the man whose presidency overlapped most of his own stay in power. Martin Anderson, the author and a principal economic aide to Reagan, was a founding trustee of the museum, along with Edwin Meese, who shared Reagan's career from the beginning to the end. Much time was devoted to the enigma, the Reagan who never pretended to know the economic intricacies of the day but knew what he wished done, which worked. James Miller, former director of the Office of Management and Budget, cited the experience of 1981, when the recession came after the anti-inflationary reins had been tightened. Reagan took the occasion to further endorse the Kemp-Roth tax reduction. There was, however, the interval when his public approval sank to 35 percent. "I guess," Sander Vanocur recalled Reagan saying later that year, "we'll have to arrange for somebody to shoot me again."

The clouds parted, and the strong climb began toward the era of prosperity only briefly interrupted in 1991. The credit for the turnaround, Dinesh D'Souza remembered, had been widely given to Paul Volcker, the FedChief. "Don't you sometimes feel upstaged by Volcker?" someone asked Reagan. "Oh, no," he said. "I once played opposite Errol Flynn."

Richard Allen, a former National Security Advisor, pondered the inscrutability of Reagan's directions. He had proclaimed Moscow the center of the evil empire, but after 1985 declined to reassert that designation. Why? Because he saw in Gorbachev someone capable of moving the Soviet Union away from its historical mandate, to spread its evil throughout the world. "And Reagan's style," Jeane Kirkpatrick commented, "wasn't to take every concession as final, settling for what had been achieved. Always it was only the first step." Another speaker recalled that Gorbachev had made the same observation: "Reagan pushed me one step more and then one step more till we got to the precipice and then he wanted one step more."

The Reagan Center and its buildings were constructed entirely by private subscription. But the enduring cost of maintenance is a continuing problem. The presidential libraries date back to FDR's at Hyde Park. They are huge enterprises—the Reagan Library houses over 50 million documents and gallery-size mementos of his eight years in office. Adam Smith taught us that there are three legitimate uses of public money: the maintenance of justice, the cost of military defense, and the preservation of public monuments. The trustees of the library and museum do much more than wipe the dust off documents. One wall is filled with movie posters and covers of magazines featuring Reagan.



There are films shown on a rotating basis, fresh ones every 20 minutes. Mary Jane Wick, the wife of Reagan's USIA head Charles Wick, has an eye for the complete man, sports announcer, movie and television star, governor of California, and did much for the museum that gives it life.

A day's exposure to the shrine, and to contemporary celebrants of the phenomenon, underscores the aptness of the old cliché, Only in America. The exactly reproduced Oval Office reminds visitors especially wistful for days gone by, that it once was occupied by a man totally wholesome, who knew what to do, and did it to the best of his ability, and the rest is history.

The Quarrel Ahead

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 12

WHITE HOUSE spokesmen let it slip that Mr. Clinton would take special pains at the end of next year to deprive the GOP managers of the impeachment initiative of their seats. People for the American Way has more ambitious designs, having already begun a drive to collect five million dollars to oppose legislators who voted in favor of impeachment.

I'd advise the whole gang to ease up on this matter . . .

D: You voted for conviction on both counts, you don't deny it?

R: No, George, I don't.

D: Now that he has been acquitted with the backing of the American people, how do you account for your vote?

R: I took an oath, administered by the Chief Justice, to vote my conscience after surveying the facts.

D: Your conscience baloney. You were off on a partisan crusade.

R: Cool down, George. Why do they say "partisan" about the Republicans who voted guilty and fail to say "partisan" about the Democrats who voted to acquit? Since we are addressing today an assembly of voters who need to make up their minds whether it is disqualifying to have voted to impeach or to convict, I want to shake loose from the legal cobweb for a minute—

D: What do you mean cobweb, the Constitution?

R: Well, the Constitution has its ambiguities, nothing was plainer than that, during the months and

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months when people argued on both sides that Clinton's behavior was an impeachable offense—

D: You are resisting a definition of the term "legal cobweb."

R: Not with mischief in mind, really. In the case of O. J. Simpson, everybody knows he was guilty but he was voted not guilty. Legal cobwebs played a role there, but we tend to agree that even though the laws are often misappropriated, on the whole they should stay as they are. In the case of Clinton, the stakes are set very high by the Constitution—we needed 67 votes. That isn't a cobweb, it is an iron bar. Where the cobwebs appeared was on the matter of high crimes and misdemeanors.

D: The majority voted that he hadn't been guilty of either of the two concrete allegations, that he had committed perjury or obstructed justice.

R: You put your finger on it. The Constitution, as interpreted by the majority of Democrats, insists that offenses committed by a president (or federal judge) are public in character. As regards Mr. Clinton's conduct, his most conspicuous defender, Dale Bumpers, in his famous oration pleading for his old friend, acknowledged that his behavior had been delinquent.

D: Senator Bumpers gave a moving oration, the burden of which was that we should not convict—

R: Yes, but what Bumpers said about Clinton was that his behavior had been—"indefensible, outrageous, unforgivable, and shameless." So the result of it all is that we are left with a president who wasn't found guilty of perjury or obstruction of justice but is acknowledged to have acted indefensibly, outrageously, unforgivably, and shamelessly. What we Republicans want to know is why does his success in getting through the Senate make him a national hero?

D: He is a hero inasmuch as he has triumphed over a campaign inflamed by narrow, puritanical, bigoted interests which, thanks to the Constitution, didn't prevail.

R: We'll go to the voters then on that issue. We Republicans will say: Okay, the majority didn't think he ought to have been thrown out on account of what he did. But the majority of the American people concluded that what he did was disgraceful. So why don't we concentrate on looking for candidates in the future who will promise publicly not to act as Clinton acted? Never are they to open their arms, beg the people to believe them, and proceed to tell a straight lie. Since we are talking about likely events in the fall of 2000, let me say that your headache, George, is going to be a lot more acute than mine. You'll be boasting about how the Constitution saved Clinton. I'll be asking the voters whether they think that the case against Clinton should have been hidden, or pursued to lengths thought credible by the majority of the House of Representatives. Your legacy will have been to teach the country how to defend the indefensible. Ours, to take language seriously.

So put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Are You a Wimp On Business?

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 9

A WEEK ago I received a letter with an accompanying questionnaire. The writer is doing a piece for *The Nation*. This is a doggedly leftist magazine which is trying to decide whether Alger Hiss is guilty, but is firmly committed to the proposition that the world is not flat. The editor wishes to know how often NATIONAL REVIEW magazine and I, its editor for many years, have recorded criticisms of the business world. The design is transparently clear: What *The Nation* intends is to demonstrate that conservative critics-at-large are indifferent to the sins of commerce.

On Sunday, February 7, 60 *Minutes* devoted a segment ostensibly to criticizing General Motors for defective engineering and delinquent behavior, actually, to showcase Ken Starr as apparently indifferent to obstruction of justice so long as William Jefferson Clinton is not involved.

The essential story is that General Motors in the early '70s released a station wagon with a rear gas tank on which impact, by an accidentally released trailer, caused the car to explode into flames, tragically killing a couple and their 14-year-old son.

There was of course a lawsuit, and the plot heated up over an engineer's memorandum. In order to give fuller protection to the gas tank it was somewhere proposed to add a shield, at a cost of about ten dollars. The hot memo was to the effect that it wasn't worth it to add the shield because the possibility of an accident such as that suffered by the featured family was too remote to warrant such preemptive attention. When the memorandum was unearthed, the question arose whether it was a privileged document, inasmuch as it was unearthed at the instigation of a lawyer.

Anyway, Kenneth Starr was hired, on appeal, to assert the document's status as privileged; and General Motors ended up paying thirty-three million dollars as compensation for the son's death.

Concerning the whole thing, not all that much more need be said than that 1) manifestly, General Motors made a lousy decision for which it was liable; 2) the law having to do with what is and is not privileged is complicated and in some cases ambiguous; 3) every defendant in every situation is going to attempt to block jury access to adverse, let alone incriminating, evidence; and 4) judgments of thirty-three million dollars remind us that topsy-turvy tort awards are distorting the entire judicial process.

But back to the point: Are conservatives blind or ethically callous about business delinquencies? It is true that they don't feature heavily in conservative commentary. But there is a humdrumness to business malpractice which simply makes it all less eye-catching than misbehavior by individuals, let alone individuals occupying public office. Then too, our attitude towards business conservatives are guided by the stirring admonition of our godfather. Adam Smith was overdoing it a bit, but what he wrote in *Wealth of Nations* was, "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices." That sounds like Karl Marx talking, but the point of it is of course that the temptation to realize profit is universal and certainly affects men and women in business.

When should conservatives blow the whistle? Last Friday I was on an American Airlines flight booked to leave Los Angeles at 11 A.M. At 7 A.M. I got word that the flight was canceled; no explanation.

What goes through the mind of the customer in such situations? A suspicion: The airline didn't have a profitable number of tickets sold on that flight, so it just canceled, consolidating such passengers as it had on other flights. That's illegal.

But two days later the secret is out. American Airlines pilots are objecting to the acquisition of a small airline whose pilots are paid less than AA pilots. So they are engaged in a slowdown. How do you do that? You call in and say you are sick.

Is that legal?

No. But nobody is going to prosecute you. How can you prove that 200 pilots didn't in fact feel sick that morning? If there is a possibility of reduced pay, wouldn't that make *you* sick?

So it goes. Everyone should be alert to abuse. The primary protections are: free trade and competition, which are effected by anti-monopoly laws, stoutly defended by *The Nation*, which wishes to hurt business, and NATIONAL REVIEW, which wishes business to prosper.

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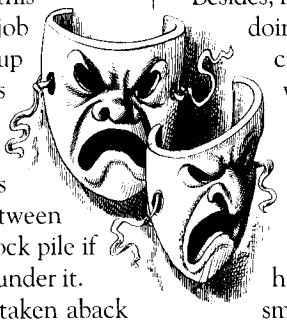
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

HI, EVERYBODY, this is Bill Clinton. Bet you never thought I'd be a guest columnist for "The Misanthrope's Corner" but Florence has a hang—I mean, she's been on a spiritual journey renewing her commitment to those amber waves of grain she loves so much, so I told her I'd be happy to spell her this time around.

The way it came about was, Florence called Vernon Jordan and asked him to find somebody to fill the job. Man, that was really a switch. Usually ol' Vern hears about the warm body first and then comes up with a job, but this time he heard about the job first and then had to come up with a warm body. And is mine ever warm. . . . Justice isn't the only thing that's obstructed around here. It's been such a long time between affidavits that I'd suborn a rock pile if I thought there was a snake under it.



Anyhow, ol' Vern was so taken aback to hear from a woman who already had a job that he had to stall while he got his thoughts together, so he goes (sorry about that verb but I got it from Monica), "Do you play golf?" and Florence goes, "Golf is an exercise in Scottish pointlessness for people who are no longer able to throw telephone poles at each other."

Well, ol' Vern is like, "Hello?" (he spent so much time talking to Monica that he turned into a Valley Girl too). There was a silence on the other end, then Florence is like, "You already said that when you answered the phone." Well, that got ol' Vern steamed, so he goes, "Do you dislike Scottish people?" and Florence goes, "Don't think small."

He told me later, "Mission aborted. That woman is a stranger to networking. She's also a racist and a golfist. Golfism is tearing this country apart."

That's when I felt challenged. Hillary always says I've never met a stranger, and the other week at the prayer breakfast that GOP jock Steve Largent told me, "I care for you and I love you," so just for the heck of it I decided to give Florence a call and turn her into an FOB.

"Hi, Flo! I hear you need a caddy."

"Golf is tiddlywinks played while standing up and wearing a hat."

"Aw, shoot! I bet I could have you on the golf course in ten minutes."

"I'm Vernon's age."

". . . Oh. Well, I mean . . . well, at least I can write your column for you."

So that's how I ended up as guest columnist. Sid's already figured out how to spin it: Appearing in NATIONAL REVIEW proves how bipartisan I am. Besides, it'll be good therapy for me, like doing the *New York Times* Sunday crossword, which I always do with one hand while . . .

Why did the White House architect have to go and make this office *oval*? It always keeps me from concentrating. Whenever I'm in here I feel like I'm sitting smack-dab in the middle of a great big little ol' . . . That's why I hit on Monica and Kathleen and the rest. It wasn't my fault—the office made me do it.

Well, that's all DNA under the bridge now. I'd better read a few of these sample columns to see what I'm supposed to do here. Hoo-boy! That Buckley sure is nig—chintzy. They only give her one page. It's the last page, too. Wonder how she boils it down to make it fit? You can't say "continued on" because there's nowhere left to go. That's what I call too much closure for comfort. Short means clear, which is not good. When I work on my State of the Union I like to put in lots of padding so I can bull my way through . . . I mean, so I can lead the American people to a thorough understanding of new programs to improve their lives and help them invest in their children's future.

Hmmm, I wonder if her asking me to be guest columnist is part of a plan to worm her way into the White House as a speechwriter? I'll have to remember to tell Bruce to give her the gate. Trouble is, my memory's so bad I might forget. I'd better tie a string around my finger. No, I'd forget to remember that too. Hey, I know where I'll tie it! That way, somebody's sure to see it.

The difference between Florence and me as writers is that she's a verticalist who goes from beginning to middle to end, whereas I'm a horizontalist who expands outward from my innermost core. The first thing I do is write down the key words I'm going to use: renewal, change, reconciliation, families, personal, comfort, healing, focus, understand, communicate, share, save, touch (say exactly *what*).

Second, I write down the key phrases: "the most vulnerable among us," "our fighting men and women," "not a single child," "come together" (change that to *interface*), "good for our country," "build a new world," "I need to get back to work" (delete *back*).

Third, I write down the ping-pong balls: old answers to new questions; yesterday's solutions to tomorrow's problems; present dreams and future goals; going forward and turning backward; giving much and taking little; building up and pulling out (Note: fix).

Then I go back and put in the ideas. That's how you expand outward from your innermost core.

Well, I'd better get back to work—I mean, to work—on this column. Wonder if they'd change the title just this once, as a special favor to me? Not that anybody would ever take *me* for a misanthrope, but presidents are people too. "Peepul, peepul who need peeeee-pullll!". . . That Barbra's got a great bod. The face . . . well, who sees women's faces? True beauty is found in the back of the neck.

More bad news on the legacy front. Ever since Paula Jones described my seduction technique I've tried to avoid Frenchmen, but Jacques Chirac showed up and said he was glad to be back "in the country which constantly surprises the world." What you reckon he meant by that? Then we got into fruit imports and it turned into the Banana Summit.

The good news is, I'm secretly pushing for a bill of attainder to tighten up congressional residency requirements in case Hillary runs for Senator from New York. Then she'll be in Elmira and I'll be in Fine Fettle! SOOOO-EEEEEE! NR

Miss King can be reached at P. O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, Va. 22404.

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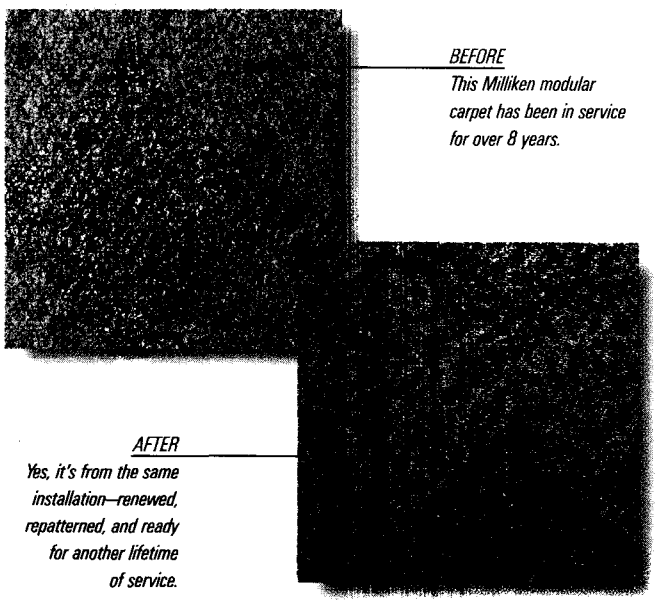

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Yes, it's from the same installation–renewed, repatterned, and ready for another lifetime of service.

Seeing is believing. We'd like to send you our free Environmental Survival Kit to show just how down-to-earth Earth Square really is. Call us today at 1.877.327.3639 and start rethinking.

1

new carpet installed

2

old carpet recovered

3

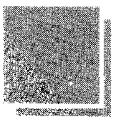
carpet supercleaned

4

carpet fibers retextured

5

new colors & patterns added

6

renewed carpet installed

MILLIKEN

Milliken Carpet
In the U.S. or Canada call toll-free: 1-877-327-3639
Phone: 706/880-5618 Fax: 706/880-3134

201 Lukken Industrial Dr. W./LaGrange, Georgia 30240
www.millikencarpet.com

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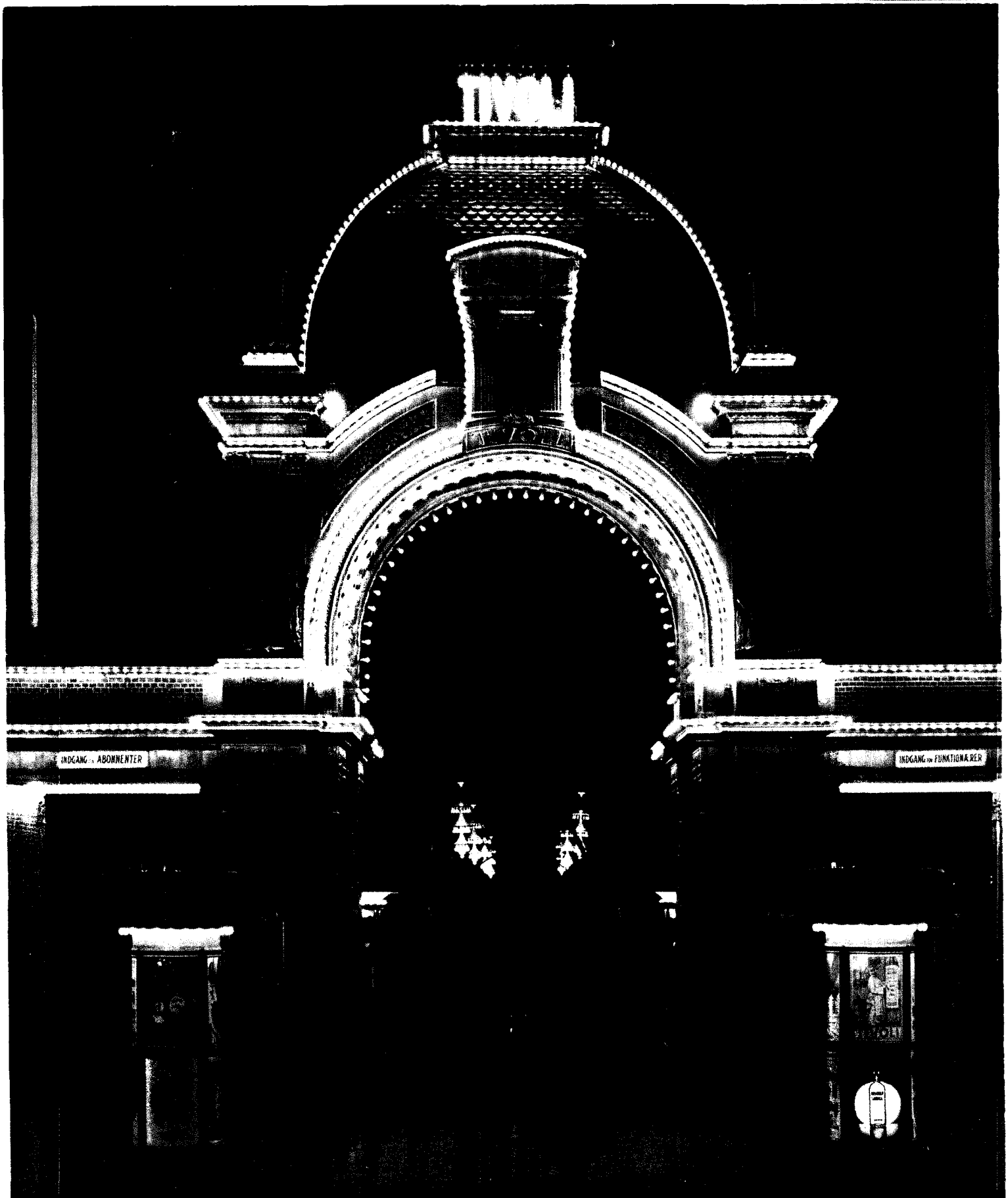

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